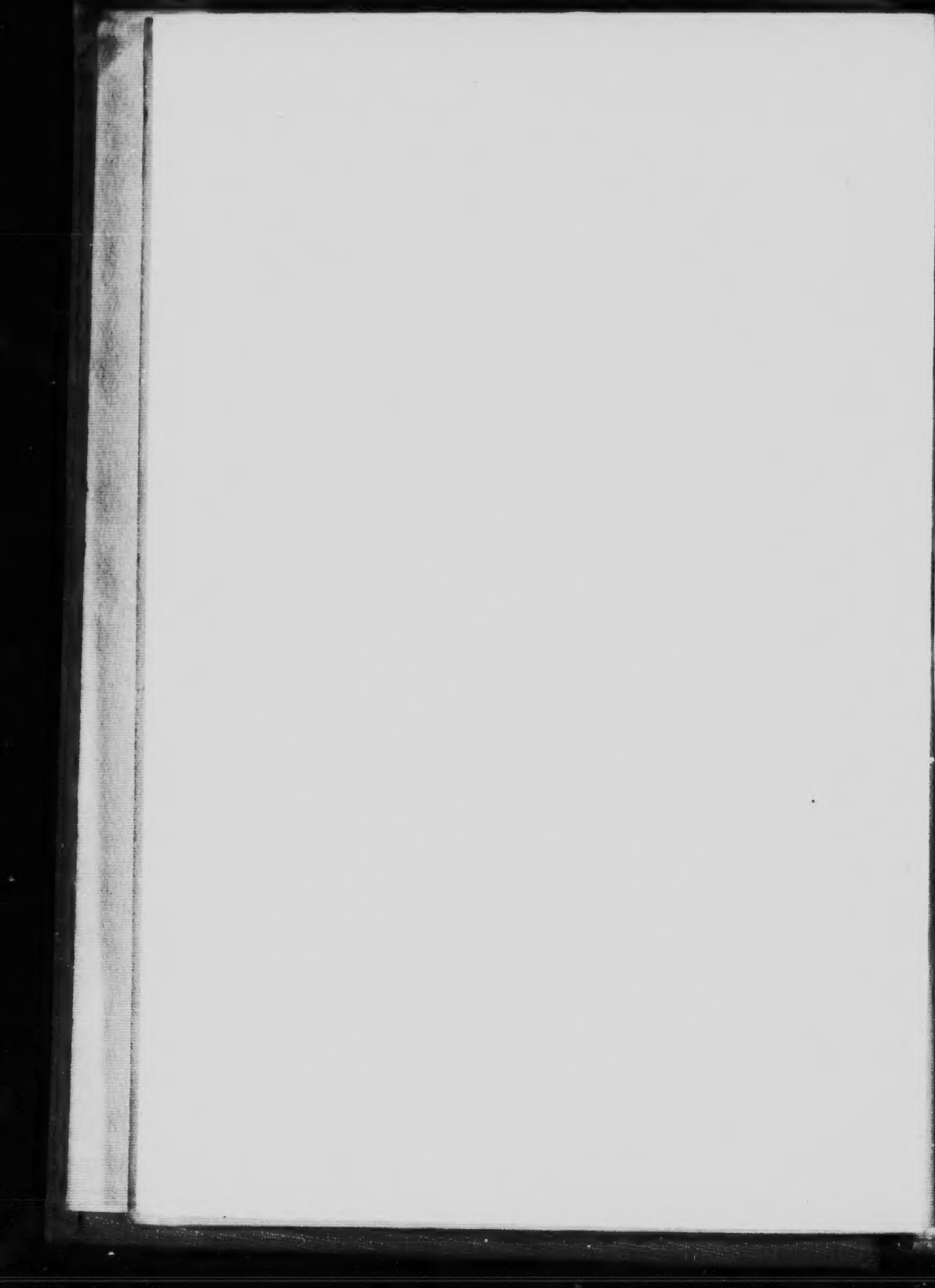
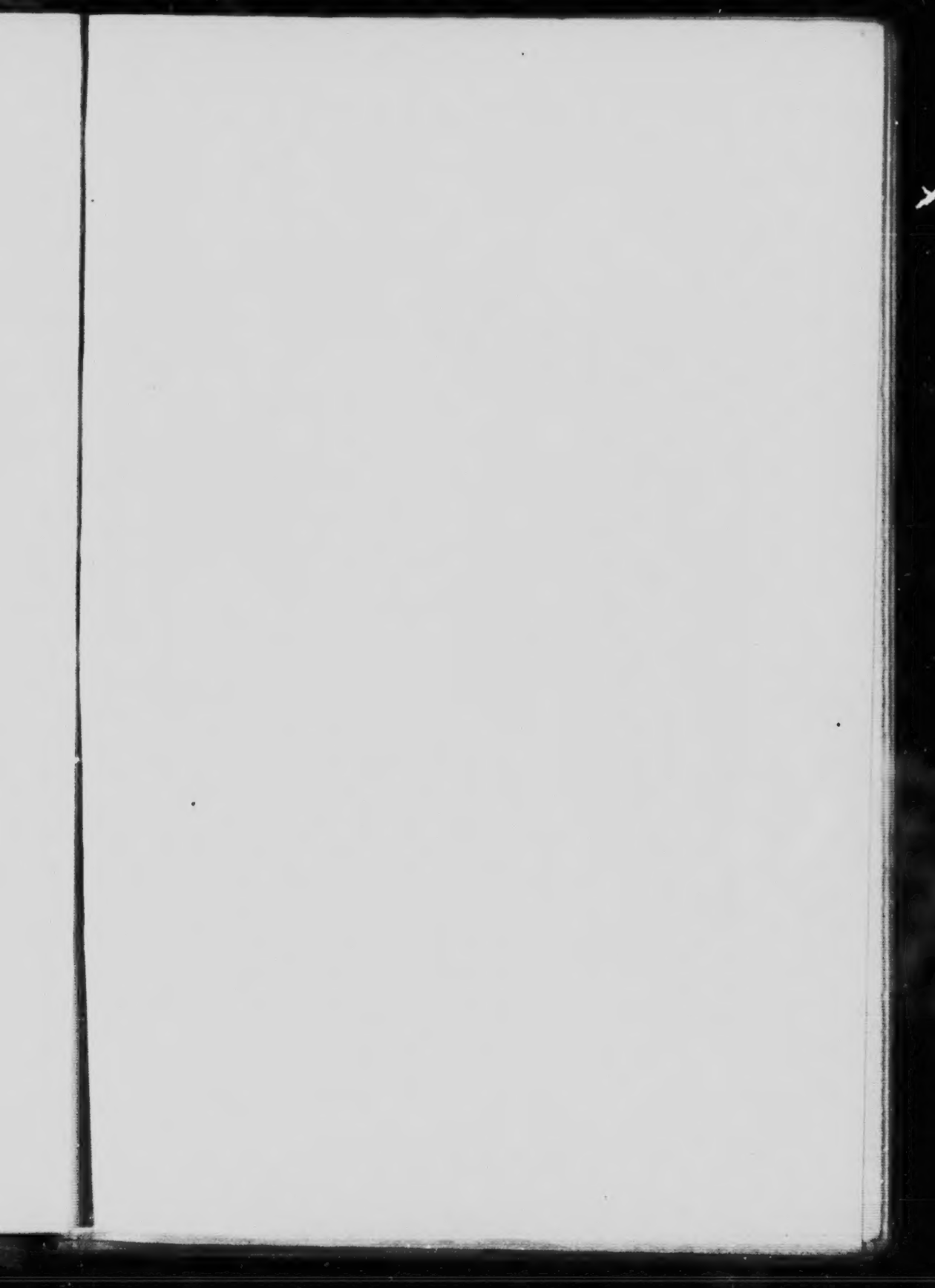


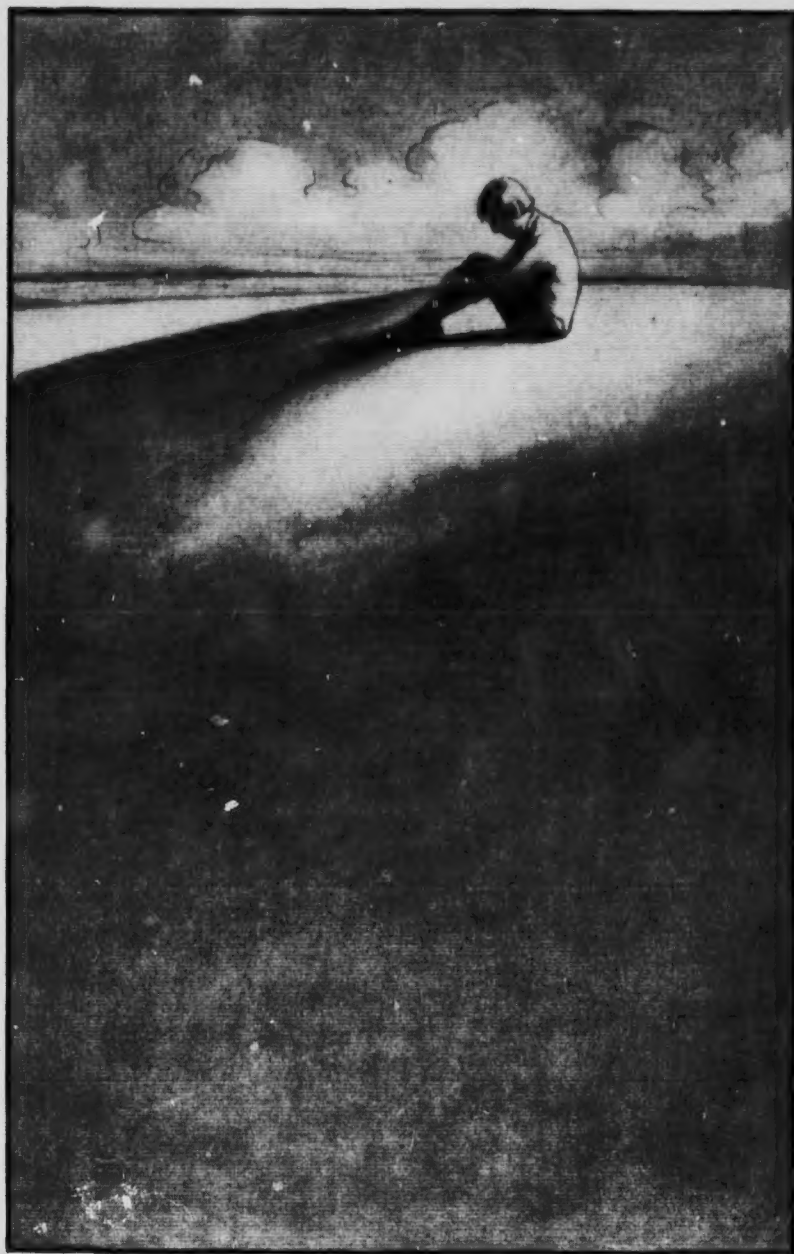
STORIES
FOR THE
STORY
HOUR

—
MARZIALS

STORIES FOR THE STORY HOUR







Fr.

Where do Stories come from ?

STORIES FOR THE STORY HOUR

FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER

BY
ADA M. MARZIALS



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INTRODUCTION

TO THE STORY-TELLER

TO issue a whole bookful of new and original stories for the story-teller when she has already such a wealth of old and valued material from which to choose would seem at first sight both superfluous and presumptuous.

What chance has even the best of modern fairy stories against such nursery classics as *The Three Little Pigs*, or the immortal *Sleeping Beauty*?

The telling of old and well-known stories needs no justification. They are beloved by all children, they are simple and interesting, they have stood the test of time, and they hand on to the children something of the tradition of those who were children before them.

But there are occasions when the story-teller feels that just the very moment for a story has come, and when perhaps none of the old stories quite seem to fit the mood or the circumstances in which she and her children find themselves—and your true story-teller is often a creature of moods. The 'Story Hour,'

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too, is an elastic term, and embraces many a moment beyond and outside its scheduled place on the time-table.

Perhaps even the children themselves may ask for "*quite* a new story," and there is an undeniable joy to the story-teller in telling a story which she is quite sure that none of her children has ever heard before—almost—though not quite—equal to the joy of telling a story that they all know by heart.

Sometimes some incident of the schoolroom will suggest a new story to her mind. Even the old stories were new once.

Happy must have been the story-teller who, long ago, told the story of *The Three Little Pigs* for the first time—or he who, observing the ever-recurring loveliness of the awakening spring, told to the first audience the story of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

The stories in this book are what the children call 'treat' stories—that is to say, they do not aim at teaching, but merely at the deepening of sympathy between teacher and taught, and for the pure enjoyment of both parties.

Nearly all were suggested by some particular occasion, and as the occasions were mostly happenings common to many schoolrooms, it is possible that other story-tellers and other children may find an equal enjoyment in some of our 'treat' stories.

Let me give examples of a few such occasions.

It was on a beautiful April morning, when the clear spring sunshine seemed even brighter than usual, and the sunbeams were chasing each other over the schoolroom wall, that there came some of those odd minutes which have no special place in the time-table, and which are so much the more precious on that account. We talked naturally about the sunbeams. 'Tinker Bell,' I remember, was mentioned. Then: "Do the children know the rhyme about Hickamore and Hackamore?"

Hickamore, Hackamore,
On the King's kitchen door.
All the King's horses, and all the King's men
Could not take Hickamore, Hackamore,
Off the King's kitchen door.

This rhyme was repeated several times, to the children's evident enjoyment.

When the story hour came round the storyteller said: "I will tell you a story about Hickamore and Hackamore"; it was the story entitled *Sunbeams*. Pictures were drawn at home of the gloomy King's castle, with the pine-trees growing close up to the windows. Since then sunbeams on the schoolroom wall are Hickamores and Hackamores.

Again, in March the children, who nearly all lived within a walk of Kensington Gardens, had several times mentioned the crocuses and

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daffodils in their daily 'Nature News.' We had made paintings of both, and noted the brown cloaks folded so daintily round the daffodil buds.

Then one morning the story-teller, with a daffodil in her hand, made the following statement: "I will tell you a story about four hundred and fifty princesses, and see if, at the end, you can tell me who they were." The children's interest was aroused immediately, and the story of *Daffy-down-dilly* was told, the various identities duly guessed, and the story-teller thought nothing more about the matter. Two or three mornings later one of the children ran into the schoolroom and said: "Oh, we had such fun yesterday! Ruth and me, and Betty, and Hazel, and Stanley, and all of us met in the square, and we acted the story of the four hundred and fifty princesses—and it was lovely!" So it happened with several of the other stories. *Buttercups* was suggested by a description of a field gay with buttercups by one of the children who had spent an unexpected day in the country. "It looked like a field full of gold," she said.

The Hazel Nut, a very special favourite, which has been told more than once, came in the middle of a term, when we had had several lessons on the country in autumn, and had been collecting coloured autumn leaves, and

hearing about the animals that prepare to sleep in winter-time.

The only story in this collection which is not original, though I have entirely retold it, is *The Flute-player*, an old Japanese legend. This was told to the children on the last day of a term when we had been hearing about modern Japan, and Japanese treasures, such as fans, umbrellas, sandals, and cups had been brought to the schoolroom.

Sometimes the rhymes and phrases which precede the stories in this book were repeated to the children at the beginning of the story, sometimes at the end, and sometimes, though rarely, not at all. In these last cases they just remained at the back of the story-teller's own mind, helping her to convey the atmosphere of the story to her hearers. Often the rhyme was referred to afterward to bring back memories of a particular story, when circumstances akin to those which had first called forth the story occurred again in the schoolroom.

It was hardly ever suggested that the children should make pictures to the stories, but very often these were done unexpectedly at home in play-time, and brought with pride to school.

Similarly the stories were often retold by the children themselves, either to some child who had been absent when the story was first told,

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or to some younger brother or sister at home.
"I told John about that; he *did* like it!"

The stories have been grouped according to the different months into which they fitted most naturally. If told as they are gathered in this book they would make a chain of stories round the year. But there is no reason why the story-teller should be bound by anything so arbitrary as a calendar! and she will probably get to know all the stories she can, and just tell whichever happens to fit in with the circumstances of her schoolroom and the time that she has at her immediate disposal.

May I make a plea here for story-telling on the children's part? Entirely original stories can hardly be expected of small children, and if a child is told to 'make up' a story it will generally be a more or less connected medley of the particular stories that happen to have struck his fancy. He will usually select from several stories the incidents which have appealed to him most, or which are freshest in his memory. It is often very illuminating to the story-teller if her children will tell stories to *her*. She will certainly recognize many incidents, and will discover for herself what it is in her stories that has made the strongest impression on her children's fancy. Often in the gentlest children she will find a most unexpected blood-thirstiness. "And then they were eaten *all* up!" as one very

mild little girl once finished a story to me with startling emphasis !

The children to whom the stories in this book have been told were mostly between the ages of six and seven, and they have often attempted, and succeeded very creditably, in telling, drawing, and acting stories for themselves. Many of the stories are to these children now no longer new, but old and joyful friends. May I hope that this book may give them an opportunity of becoming the new and joy-bringing friends to other children—and other story-tellers ?

My thanks are due to Messrs Blackie and Sons for permission to reprint *Sunbeams* and *Mist*, which have appeared in their *Children's Annual* of 1915, and *The Cobbler*, which is appearing in *The Children's Annual* of 1916. There is a French version of *The Flute-player* in M. Gaston Cerfberr's *Contes Japonais*. The other stories appear in print for the first time.

ADA M. MARZIALS

JANUARY

I. THE YEAR'S HOUSE

II. THE COBBLER

I

THE YEAR'S HOUSE

The year does nothing else but open and shut.

OLD PROVERB

THERE was once upon a time a most beautiful old house which stood all by itself in the midst of a garden and park. The only living human being in the house was a porter, whose business was to open the great gates leading to the house on every New Year's morning, and to close them again on every New Year's Eve. The house in many ways was magic, for, though it looked quite empty, yet it was quite full—full of memories; and the memories were all alive.

They trooped through the long, lofty corridors. They stared down from the pictures and books in the panelled library. They crowded up the broad staircase and past the pictures of old-world ancestors in blue suits and sashes. They splashed about in the old stone fountain in the glass room. They romped in the huge barn. They peered over the clipt yew hedges. They skipped about over the apples in the store-room and played hide-and-seek in the great

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fireplace in the dining-hall. They were here, there, and everywhere, and yet if you had tried to catch them you would have found that they were nowhere at all.

The house was most certainly a magic house.

It was the custom of the people of the country-side to send their children up to the Big House, as it was called, on New Year's morning. The porter opened the gates and the children went in and wandered over the rooms, and then went home again to tell of all the wonders that were within.

Every child who went in had to take something with him to the house and leave it there, and every child who came out had to bring something away with him home to his parents—and so it happened that the Big House remained always full and always empty.

One New Year's Eve a little boy called John was just going to bed in a cottage not far from the Big House.

"Mother," said he, "I will be going to the Big House very early to-morrow morning, for I want to be there when the gates open. What shall I take with me?"

"Well," said his mother, "the rule is that you must take something with you that is very dear to you."

"Then I'll take my wooden horse, mother, for although I love him so much I am almost

too old for him now, and soon I shall be wanting to read books like you do, and then should have no time to play with him—though I still love him the best of all my toys.”

So the wooden horse was taken to bed for the very last time, and very early in the morning John set off with him to the Big House. He arrived just as the porter was opening the gates.

John ran through them, up the trim drive, and in at the great front door, which was standing wide open.

He found himself in a large, stone-paved hall with a roaring fire blazing up the roomy, old-fashioned chimney.

An old man in leather gaiters was warming his hands in front of the fire.

“Chilly weather,” said he to John, “but it’s fine for skating. Oh, *JANUARY’S* the month for snow and ice and a good walk over the hills, with a pair of strong boots on your feet and a stout stick in your hand—eh, lad?” “Aye, sir,” said John, as with his wooden horse tucked under his arm he passed through the hall into a kind of lobby. The lobby was filled with coats, and dripping wet umbrellas, and a long row of goloshes. Outside the window a dog was barking.

John went to the window to look at the dog, and above, in the sky, the morning star shone bright and clear.

Below, in the courtyard, stood a ragged, wet beggar-man, and the beggar-man's dog was barking till the courtyard echoed and re-echoed.

"*FEBRUARY'S* the month for rain, sir," said the beggar-man. "I pray you, give me a penny."

"I would if I had one," said John, and he went on up the stairway with his wooden horse.

The stairway was wide and dark and extremely draughty.

Puffs of wind blew through the rails, and the wide blue curtains at the staircase window flapped and swirled in the gale. At the top of the stairway was a long passage, through which the wind howled and shrieked.

At the end of the passage was a fireplace, where stood a man with a bellows puffing at a tiny flame. It was dusty, too, and the dust blew into John's mouth and nearly choked him. In a bowl by the fireplace swayed and curtsied a dozen daffodils.

"A breeze, that's what *we* want," said the man at the fire, "a good, stiff *MARCH* breeze!" and he puffed at the flame with all his might.

"Aye, that's true enough," said John, as well as he could for choking. Then he opened one of the doors leading from the passage and found himself in a sunny morning-room, with

sunbeams chasing each other up and down the walls.

A beautiful lady was standing by the window, watering the flowers in a window-box outside. She was smiling, and yet her eyes were full of tears.

"'Twas an *APRIL* fool who planted these for me," said she, "but if the sun shines on them and the water pours on them they will be as gay and merry as ever flowers were."

"Aye, truly," said John, and he opened a white door, which led into the nursery.

Such a pretty, gay nursery!—all white and red. There were pictures on the walls and a bird singing at the window, and a high brass-topped fender by the fireplace, and a tall chair on wheels, and a rocking-horse, and in the cot the sweetest golden-haired baby girl John had ever seen.

"I'm *MAY*," said she, "and the baa-lambs are here. Look out of the window, little boy."

John looked out of the window, and there, beneath him, was a meadow full of frisky lambs, and one next to it full of buttercups and daisies.

"Will you give me your horse, little boy?"

"Yes, indeed," said John, "for he is my dearest possession."

He put the wooden horse at the foot of the little girl's bed and, closing the door behind him, went into yet another room: a beautiful room,

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all papered with roses, and real red roses in a silver bowl on a table and a butterfly hovering over them.

In a window-seat sat two people. John thought they must be a prince and princess. They were talking so earnestly together that they did not see John at all.

The Prince said: "Surely on such a beautiful *JUNE* day as this you can refuse me nothing. When the night comes, and the round silver moon looks in at the window, I will come for you." And the Princess said, "Yes," and then the Prince kissed her, and John slipped away as fast as ever he could.

He found himself in a passage leading to a room made entirely of glass. The sun was pouring in through the glass panes. It was *very* hot and would have been unbearable but for a little stone fountain in the centre.

At the base of the fountain was a little pool in which goldfish were swimming, and the water splashed and gurgled deliciously. The walls of the glass room were covered with growing peaches and nectarines, so luscious and so juicy ripe that John felt very much tempted to eat one. Two or three bees were humming busily about them. The whole room was scented with lavender.

A fair lady sat by the fountain. She held a fan in her hand, and was dressed in a cool white dress.

"'Tis indeed *JULY* when the peaches are ripe!" said she. "Will you not take one with you, little boy?"

"No," said John. "I will see all the rooms first, and then choose what I will take home with me."

He went out into the passage again and opened another door.

To his surprise the door led into a huge barn. One end of the barn was stacked with corn from floor to ceiling. The great doors were open and a wagon was standing outside.

The wagoner was young, lusty, and ruddy, and the golden corn shone in the sunlight.

"I be a sailor home from the sea," said he, "and I could tell ye many a yarn; whiles I'm home I'm helping with the harvest."

The great beams were thick with cobwebs, and John could hear the scurry of the little field-mice under the corn.

"'Tis the last load I'm bringin' in!" called the wagoner. "We gets our harvest in in *AUGUST*. There's a fine swi g in yonder corner if ye've a mind to try it." John peered into the corner and would have stayed, but he remembered that he must get back to the house.

"Good-bye, mate!" called he.

"Good-bye, mate!" called the cheery wagoner. Then John went downstairs again, and half-

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way down he came upon a little room where everything was Japanese. Such a tiny room!

It had walls of paper, and a painted scroll hung from one of them, and a painted screen across the doorway. In the centre of the room was a red lacquered table with little cups of steaming hot tea, and a beautiful china bowl filled with flame-coloured chrysanthemums stood on the floor in one corner.

Seated on the ground, in front of the tea-table, was a tiny Japanese lady in a beautifully embroidered dress with golden dragons worked on it.

"'Tis in *SEPTEMBER* that I bring you the flower of old Japan," said she, as she took one of the chrysanthemums out of the bowl and offered it to John.

"No, thank you," said John. "It is beautiful, but I will take nothing yet."

So John left the little room and went on his way down the stairs. But somehow or other he had come down the back stairs by mistake, and the first door he opened led him straight into the storeroom.

It was rather misty inside, but John could make out the rows and rows of shelves. Pots of jam were there, almost in hundreds, with a label tied on to each one of them. There were two or three shelves full of apples and another two or three shelves full of pears, and

a great bag lying open crammed with nuts, and over everything lay a strong, pungent scent of dried herbs. An old woman with a frilly cap and white apron was arranging the apples.

"Well, my dearie," said she, "and it's right ye should come to my storeroom in *OCTOBER*. There is plenty and to spare for ye here."

"I'm afraid I've lost my way," said John. "I came down the back stairs by mistake."

"If ye go along there," said the old woman, "the passage will lead ye straight to the library."

"Thank you," said John, and with a rather longing look at the apples he went down the passage and found the library, just as the old woman had said.

It was a beautiful, peaceful room, panelled with oak. On the polished floor were soft-coloured rugs. A few old portraits hung on the walls. Through the windows John could see the dying leaves falling on the damp grass. There were thick red curtains over the door, and great cosy arm-chairs by the crackling wood fire. On the table were shaded candles, and round all the walls were books, and books, and books: some bright, some sober-toned, but all—oh, so old, and fairyish, and inviting!

"It was a book I wanted instead of the horse," said John, and he climbed on a chair to look at the books more closely.

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He picked out one, full of fairies and living pictures of castles and knights in armour, and, lying flat on the floor, began to read it.

"'Twill be time enough when thou art old to be a-reading of books," said a voice, and, looking up, John saw an old man sitting in one of the cosy arm-chairs with a great book in his lap. His hair and beard were as white as snow, and his eyes as blue as the summer sky.

"'Tis in *NOVEMBER* that comes St Martin's Summer," said he, "when the old grow young again. Enjoy thy youth now, and take the book back with thee to read later."

John looked more closely at the old man.

"Why, you are almost like Father Christmas!" he cried—and at that moment came a shout of laughter, and then the music of a carol from behind a door on the other side of the library.

Holding his precious book tight under one arm, John opened the door, and found himself in the last room of all—the dining-hall. It was certainly Christmas Eve here!

The hall was decked with holly and ivy and a bunch of mistletoe hung over the doorway. Were there really sprites and goblins dancing about him, or did John only imagine them?

At one end of the hall stood a gigantic Christmas tree, blazing with candles, and on it were

hanging guns and trumpets, drums and balls, and a bright shining star at the top.

On the long dining-table was a huge Christmas pudding, all on fire, with a piece of holly stuck in the middle of it. Hanging from the great wide fireplace was a row of stockings, and standing beside them was no less a person than Father Christmas himself!—red coat, white beard and all!

"A Merry Christmas!" laughed he to John. "It would not be *DECEMBER* without *me*, would it?"

"No, indeed," said John.

And all the time, from outside, came the sweet voices of the carol-singers:

"And God bless you and send you
A happy New Year.
And God send you
A happy New Year."

The music seemed to call John to go outside too.

Still holding his book under one arm, he went out into the night and along to the great gates, which were standing open just as he had left them.

Beside the gates stood the porter.

John passed out, and the gates closed behind him with a clang.

When he peeped through the bars the Big

30 Stories for the Story Hour

House looked silent, dark, and empty; but John, who had been inside, knew now that it was full.

And then, away down the hill he ran, to wish his mother a Happy New Year.

II

THE COBBLER

*Cobbler ! Cobbler ! mend my shoes.
Get it done by half-past two.*

OLD RHYME

THERE was once a king who boasted that the cobblers in his country were better than those of any other.

Every village in his kingdom had its own cobbler, and so skilful were they that it was said that they could make any old pair of boots or shoes to look as good as new.

The King's own shoes did not require much cobbling. He was so proud of the size of his feet that he never walked at all, and his shoes only wore out at the tips, where he stepped on his toes in getting in and out of the royal carriages.

He had only one daughter, and she never walked anywhere either. She was very beautiful, but no sensible prince had ever wanted to marry her, as she could neither walk nor dance.

She had very tiny feet, and even tinier shoes ; and, like her father, she only wore her shoes out at the tips, when she stepped in and out of the royal carriages.

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Nevertheless the King and Princess had a Court Cobbler, and a very important personage he was.

He lived in a little shed at the bottom of the King's garden and mended all the Court shoes.

It was said that he mended the shoes of the common people too—but if he did he never told the King.

Every one knows that if a Court Cobbler is to keep his post he must be exclusive—very exclusive—so if the Court Cobbler mended the shoes of the shepherds or dancing girls, he took good care to hide them under the Court shoes so that no one should see them.

He was a queer man, the Court Cobbler—old, wizened, and brown, with a long thumb, a greasy leather apron, and one bleary eye. Some people thought he had dealings with the fairies, but nobody dared ask him—not even the King himself.

The truth was that the King was afraid of the Court Cobbler. Was not he the only man in the kingdom who knew why the King never walked anywhere?

Most people thought that it was just because he was a king. But the Court Cobbler *knew* that it was because he was so proud of his small feet, and wore his shoes three sizes too small.

So it came about that the King never even

mentioned the word fairies to the Court Cobbler, he was far too much afraid of him.

One day it happened that there had been a great deal of entertaining at the palace, and the King and Princess had had to get in and out of the royal carriages so often that they had worn through the toes of all their shoes.

The King, as was his custom, sent for the Court Cobbler.

"My shoes and those of my daughter are worn through," said he. "Mend us each a pair to be ready at half-past two this afternoon. We are driving to meet the Prince of a neighbouring kingdom who comes to ask my daughter's hand in marriage. My shoes are the brown calf, my daughter's the blue brocade."

"Very good, your Majesty," said the Court Cobbler. "Would your Majesty care to have them made a trifle larger?"

"Certainly not!" said the King. "They will not feel new unless they pinch. What impertinence! Two-thirty sharp!"

The Princess sighed, but she was too well brought up to say anything.

The Cobbler looked at her sharply, winked his one bleary eye, took up the shoes, brown calf in one hand, blue brocade in the other, and went off to the Cobbler's shed at the bottom of the garden. There was a pile of shoes lying on the floor. Conspicuous among them as he

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turned them about and tossed them here and there were an old shepherd's pair of brown boots with a patch on one side, and a dancing girl's blue slippers.

Strange that such as they should be seen in a Court Cobbler's shed!

He sat down amid the heap of shoes, took up a pair and began to sing to himself as he stitched.

It was a strange song he sang, and, as though there was magic in it, his needle flew from side to side in time to the music and the shoes began to grow rapidly as good as new. Truly, when he had done, there was little difference between the shepherd's brown boots and the King's elegant calf pair, between the dancing girl's blue slippers and the Princess's little blue brocaded shoes.

The Cobbler winked as he looked at them. Yes, surely there must have been magic in his song.

At two-thirty precisely two brown-paper parcels were handed in at the palace, one for the King, and one for the Princess.

One contained a pair of brown boots, the other a pair of blue slippers.

The King was to start before the Princess, so he received his boots first.

They were pulled on.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the King.

"That wretch of a cobbler has made them a size too large. Phew! How stuffy it is in here! Draw up the blinds and open the windows and let in the air and sunlight! I shall not need the carriage to-day, I am walking to the frontier."

"Walking! Walking! Indeed your Majesty must be dreaming," said the courtiers. "Surely your Majesty did not say walking. Why, a king *never* walks!"

"What do *you* know about the matter?" said the King testily. "I am a King, and I am going to walk—lead the way, gentlemen, or I shall be late."

They went down the grand staircase. The King followed, muttering to himself the whole way: "*H'm*, I don't want to walk, but my feet don't seem inclined to do anything else. I feel that even if I had climbed into my carriage they would have just stepped out at the other side, and as I cannot let my feet go alone, I suppose I must go too. See what comes of that beggarly Cobbler having made my shoes a size too large. I lose my dignity at once. However, I will have his head off as soon as I get home again. That will provide a most excellent entertainment for my future son-in-law."

As he was thus talking his feet had carried him (there is no other way of expressing it) down the palace steps and out on to the road. Stop he

could not. The courtiers panted a short way behind him, but he soon outdistanced them all.

Before long he found himself quite alone, climbing steadily up one of the mountain paths that led over the frontier. His feet knew the way as though by instinct. He did not. He had never been there before. He was fat, and his legs were weary, and his breath came hard; but on strode his two feet up hill and down dale, undaunted by the roughness of the stones or the peril of the ascent.

At first he spent unnecessary breath in cursing the Court Cobbler, and devising aloud every possible form of torture for him; but as he mounted higher and higher his thoughts began to take a different turn.

"Bless my soul!" he said again, "and to think that this is part of my kingdom, and that I have never seen it before. It really is very beautiful. I will have a carriage road made here at once."

As he was speaking his foot slipped and he fell with a thud on to his nose.

"*H'm*, too rough for carriages—I mean I will walk here again to-morrow," said he hastily, as, puffing and blowing, he scrambled to his feet again.

The path began to grow smoother. The King found his feet mounting a grassy slope. Sheep were grazing about him. Blue sky above him.

Far below lay the city with its roofs and towers shining in the sunlight and carriage roads like white ribbons winding away from it in all directions. He would like to have stopped and admired the view, especially the carriage roads, but his feet bore him on. Up the slopes, over the rocks, right on to the snow which he had seen white and sparkling in the distance.

The King puffed and panted more than ever. He felt strangely exhilarated.

"It is curious how much younger I feel," he said. "If my feet would only stop now, I could eat an enormous dinner. Truly we will have a magnificent banquet to-night. It would be almost worth a walk every day to have such an appetite as this."

The path now took a downward turn and began to descend rapidly until it joined a road which had lain hidden in the valley.

The King opened his eyes wide as he strode along the road. Coming toward him with all pomp and dignity was the neighbouring Prince's cortège, headed by a coach and four in which sat the Prince himself.

It was only when the King saw the gorgeous coach coming slowly toward him that he fully realized the absurdity of his position.

Alone, without one single attendant, hot, red, and panting, robed and crowned, and with a

pair of boots a size too large, to be seen striding over a solitary mountain path to meet the Prince who was to marry his daughter!

"Why, it is absurd!" he said aloud. "The whole thing is perfectly absurd! I must get back to the palace before he sees me." But try as he would his feet would only go one way, and that was toward the Prince's coach, which was slowly approaching nearer and nearer.

"Well, I must just face it," said the King, "but woe betide that Cobbler when I get back to the palace."

The coach drew up in front of him. The coachman's eyes were nearly dropping out of his head in astonishment at beholding a king, in robe and crown, striding along the public highway. "For all the world like any old shepherd," as he described it afterward.

The Prince was too polite to make any comment. He dismounted from the coach and bowed to the King.

"I am honoured that you should thus meet me on foot, sire," he said. "You have doubtless left your coach a few yards down the road, allow me to escort you thither."

"Not at all, not at all," panted the King, casting longing eyes at the Prince's sumptuous coach.

But his feet were already set for home, and

the Prince started to accompany him, thinking to meet the royal carriage at every turn of the road.

"Not at all, not at all!" panted the King again. "Er—the fact is, that is, my new boots—well, to tell the truth—er—I walked over the frontier from my palace to meet you, and—there is nothing like walking, sir, nothing like it at all," repeated the King with determination. "It creates such an appetite." Here he stumbled against a stone, and continued hastily: "I have seen beauties, sir, that until my feet took to walking I never could have believed existed in my kingdom at all. No, sir—there is *nothing* like walking!"

The Prince, who was young and athletic (and, as the King observed, had quite good-sized feet), entirely agreed, and enlivened the way back to the palace with tales of the walking tours and excursions he had taken in his own kingdom.

The sun had set red and gold behind the city when they entered the gates, and as they approached the garden entrance to the palace the stars began to show and a pale moon climbed into the clear sky. It was shining bright and full as they passed through the garden. A scent of flowers hung everywhere on the still air. They came suddenly on a crowd of courtiers standing hushed and silent amid the trees.

"What's this?" said the King. "Some

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dancing girl, I suppose! I never drive this way, and when one walks one sees so many new things that—— Why, bless my soul! it's——"

"Hush!" interrupted the Prince. "Do not disturb her."

The King's feet hurried him past the group. The Prince lingered behind.

A slim and beautiful girl was dancing under the trees. She looked every inch a princess, so fair was she.

She had twinkling blue slippers on her feet.

As the Prince stood there the crowd drifted to one side and she flickered toward him.

"Welcome," said she, smiling full in his face.

Then in a moment she was gone. He saw the blue slippers flit up the palace steps.

The King was still puffing on ahead.

"We will meet in half an hour's time at the banquet," he said. "You will be attended to. Ho! within there, pull off my boots!"

Half an hour later the King introduced the Prince to the Princess who was to be his bride. He recognized her at once as the girl he had seen dancing in the garden, and was glad.

It was truly a magnificent banquet, and the Prince was so occupied in looking at the Princess's sweet face that he never noticed that both she and the King were wearing bedroom slippers—very roomy ones too.

As for the Cobbler, he never had his head cut off after all; and as the fashion for walking spread, he became busier than ever—but no one has yet found out whether he had any dealings with the fairies. What do you think?

FEBRUARY

I. THE STAR

II. THE PATCH OF SNOWDROPS

I

THE STAR

*Higher than a house,
Higher than a tree,
Oh, whatever can that be?*

OLD RIDDLE

THERE were once upon a time three brothers who all fell in love with the same Princess. Their names were Jan, Pete, and Smidge.

Jan and Pete were great strapping youths, but Smidge was a little slip of a fellow, though he was as sharp as a needle.

One fine day away they went to ask the Princess to marry them, but she refused them every one.

"You do not interest me at all," said she, and as soon as they had gone she forgot them entirely.

So home they all came, still as much in love with her as ever, and determined to marry her by hook or by crook.

"Let us storm the castle and carry her off," said Jan to Pete.

"Small use that would be," said Smidge. "You would only get put in prison for your pains."

"Let us go to the wars and come back as heroes covered with glory," said Pete to Jan,

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"then surely we should interest her and she could not refuse us."

"It is more than likely you would never come back at all!" said Smidge.

"Tell us then what you would suggest," said Jan and Pete both together.

"I suggest that we go and consult a Wise Woman," said Smidge.

So away they went to consult the Wise Woman.

"Good even," said she.

"Good even," said they.

"What do you want?" said she.

"Well, it's like this," said they. "We have all fallen in love with the same Princess, and we want to marry her, but she refuses us because she says that we do not interest her at all."

"Dearie me!" said the Wise Woman. "Get you all again to the palace and tell the Princess just what you think of her, and he that can put it in a new way will interest her soon enough."

So the three went back to the palace.

It was early morning, and one bright star was shining just over the topmost turret above the trees.

"That's like the Princess," thought Smidge to himself, but he did not tell the others.

"Well," said the Princess, who had quite forgotten that she had ever seen them before, "and what do *you* want?"

"We want to marry you," said they.

"First tell me what you think of me," said she in her most distant manner.

"You are the most beautiful princess in the world," said Jan.

"Oh dear, I have heard that hundreds of times before, and it does not interest me one bit," said the Princess coldly. "If you can think of nothing newer to say than that, you may as well go."

Jan could think of nothing newer at all, so he left the room.

"*I* love you more than words can say," said Pete.

"Why, I have heard that hundreds of times before too," said the Princess, still more coldly. "You had certainly better go if you can think of nothing newer to say than that!"

Pete could think of nothing more to say, either new or old, and he too left the room.

All this time Smidge had been bowing and smiling to himself quite unabashed.

"Well, you strange little creature, and what have *you* to say?" said the Princess, smiling.

With his thoughts still on the bright star above the turret and the trees, Smidge replied:

"Higher than a house,
Higher than a tree,
Is that which most resembles thee."

"And what is that?" said the Princess, really interested at last.

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"Ah, madam," said Smidge, with his most beaming smile, "that is not for *me* to say. But I will come again to-morrow, and see if you have found it out for yourself," and with a low bow he left the room.

"Higher than a house—higher than a tree—oh, whatever *can* that be?" said the Princess. "Does he mean a mountain? Surely he would never dream of comparing *me* to a mountain—unless I am getting fat."

She went to the glass and looked in, but she in no way looked like a mountain. She was slim and tall, with golden hair, and she was dressed all in silver. She might have resembled a mountain in her coldness and far-awayness, but she certainly did not look like one. As she stood before the glass with her eyes sparkling and her cheeks glowing with interest and excitement even her coldness and far-awayness seemed to disappear. No, it certainly could not have been a mountain of which he had spoken.

"What can it be?" she asked herself again.

She went on puzzling over it all day and could not sleep that night for thinking of it, and the little man who said it.

She found she was quite anxious for to-morrow to come, and for the little man to appear once more in her presence.

Sure enough the next day he came again, and with a low bow he said :

"Madam, I trust you have found out what it is that you most resemble."

"That I have not," said she; "and I have been thinking of it and you all night. I pray you tell me the answer."

"You must find that out for yourself," said he.

"Well, anyway, you can tell me your name," said she.

"I'm Smidge," said he, "and I will come again to-morrow." He bowed once more and left the room.

"Smidge—what a funny name!" said the Princess, still more interested. "I *must* find out his riddle. Higher than a house—oh, whatever can it be?" and she stamped her foot. But, try as she would, she could not think of the answer, and every day Smidge came to see her and every day she grew more and more interested in him.

At last she caused a proclamation to be made throughout the kingdom that she would marry any man who could tell her of something that was higher than a house and higher than a tree and yet resembled her.

From far and wide came princes and peasants; and among them came Smidge in a new suit, with a jaunty feather in his cap.

The princes and peasants sat all through the night trying to think of the answer.

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Very, very early in the morning they were admitted to the presence of the Princess.

"Well?" said she.

"We don't know," said they.

"But I said I would marry *any* one who would tell me," said she.

"Or who would help you to find out?" came a voice from the back of the room.

"Certainly," said she.

Then with a hop, skip, and a jump Smidge approached the Princess and, taking her by the hand, led her to the window.

He pushed it open.

Just above the turret and the trees the morning star was shining bright and clear in the pale blue sky.

"Look!" said Smidge.

"Higher than a house,
Higher than a tree,
Is that which most resembles thee."

"It is the star!" said the Princess. "How beautifully it shines and twinkles."

"You are right," said Smidge, as he kissed her hand. "And will you marry me?"

"Of course I will," said the Princess.

"You are the most beautiful princess in the world," continued Smidge, "and I love you more than words can say."

The Princess was so very interested that she

quite forgot that she had heard those same words hundreds of times before.

"Go on," said she. And Smidge went on—and for all I know to the contrary he may be going on still, for Smidge and the Princess were married that very day and lived happily ever after.

II

THE PATCH OF SNOWDROPS

*One misty moisty morning,
When cloudy was the weather,
There I met an old man
Clothed all in leather.
And how d'ye do, and how d'ye do,
And how d'ye do again.*

OLD RHYME

ONE misty moisty February morning I was going along the street in a dream, when I met a lean, tall beggar-man and his dog.

"How do you do?" says he.

"How do you do?" says I, and I stared at him, for he was dressed from top to toe in leather.

"Why do you wear leather?" says I.

"To keep out the snow," says he.

"Snow," says I, "but it's raining!"

"Ay," says he, "but I'm following the snow."

"Then I'll come with you," says I, and we began to say "How do you do?" to each other all over again.

Now the beggar-man may have been following the snow, but in all the mist and rain the only white thing that *I* could see was the tip of the tail of the beggar-man's dog, so I followed that.

We splashed on through the mud for a mile or two, when all of a sudden the beggar-man stopped still and began to say "How do you do?" to me for the third time.

"How do you do?" says I. "And what will you follow now?"

"I'm following the snow still," says he, and tramped on again.

Even yet I could see nothing white at all save the tip of the tail of the beggar-man's dog, so I went on following that.

We tramped along for another mile or so and then the beggar-man stopped again, and once more began with a "How do you do?"

"How do you do?" says I. "Are we there yet?"

"Yes," says he.

And, sure enough, beneath his feet lay a patch of white snow, just enough to make a snowball with!

I took it up, rolled it into a snowball and aimed it straight at the tail of the beggar-man's dog.

Plop!

The snowball hit the dog's tail and broke into a dozen little pieces on the drenching green grass.

Then, all of a sudden, I woke up, and behold! the beggar-man and his leather coat, and his dog, had disappeared; the rain had

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left off, and I was lying on the grass under a clear blue sky, with a thrush singing over my head, and at my side a patch of the whitest little snowdrops I ever beheld!

"How do you do?" says I to them, for I could not quite get the beggar-man out of my head.

They nodded back to me.

"Have you come to tell me winter has gone?" says I to them.

They nodded once more.

So I gathered them all and took them home with me, but from that day to this I have never again set eyes on the beggar-man or his dog.

MARCH

I. MY LADY WIND

II. DAFFY-DOWN-DILLY

I

MY LADY WIND

*My Lady Wind, My Lady Wind
Went round about the house to find
A chink to put her foot in.
She tried the keyhole in the door,
She tried the crevice in the floor,
And drove the chimney soot in.*

OLD RHYME

ONCE, long ago, My Lady Wind was the most beautiful creature in the world or out of it.

She lived in a castle on the top of a hill, and would sport and play happily from morning till evening, for she was never sad or boisterous then.

Her chief and most wonderful beauty was her long golden hair. It was like the finest threads of spun sunshine, and floated out behind her as she flew here and there. When she was at rest, it fell about her like a shimmering cloak.

My Lady Wind has only short hair now, and she is ever looking restlessly for the golden hair that was stolen from her. . . .

For you must know that My Lady Wind

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became very proud and vain of her beautiful hair, and she was never happy unless she could hear some one a-praising of it.

So she took to flying over the chimney-pots, and listening down the chimneys, and peeping through the keyholes, and prying through the chinks of doors, just to find out what people were saying about the golden hair which floated behind her like a cloud; and always she went away well pleased, for people could not help admiring it.

One day she was flying home with her golden hair all spread out behind her when she saw a cottage on the hill-side that she did not remember to have ever seen before.

It was a curious little cottage, dark and gloomy, with a twisted chimney and a very large keyhole, and a great chink in the floor.

"That is surely a new cottage over there on the hill-side," whispered My Lady Wind to herself. "I will just go and peep in and listen to what they say of me," and she gave her head a shake that sent a ripple through her lovely golden hair.

Now the curious little cottage belonged to two evil little dwarfs. They were sitting down to supper when My Lady Wind peeped down the chimney and blew the soot away so that she could see right in.

"Brother," said one to the other, "there's a cloud full of gold resting on the house."

"Brother," said the other, "I see it; it would be well for us if it would come nearer."

Then My Lady Wind flew lower and peered through the keyhole. The two evil little dwarfs hastily finished their supper and one of them got up from the table, opened a drawer, and took out a large pair of scissors.

"Brother," said he, "there is a golden key in the lock."

"Brother," said the other, "I see it, and it would be well for us if it were to fall in on to the floor."

The Wind flew lower still and watched for the great chink in the floor.

At last the dwarf who held the scissors came and stood over the hole. "Brother," said he, "pull that stone and you will find a handful of gold."

So the other little dwarf pulled up the stone that was by the chink in the floor and there, peeping and peering, was My Lady Wind with her golden hair all about her like a cloud.

As soon as they saw her, one of the evil little dwarfs seized the bright hair in his two hands, and, quick as lightning, the other dwarf plied his magic scissors to and fro.

Snip! snap! Snip! snap!

"See what comes of being too proud!" said the evil little dwarfs both together, as they looked at the pile of golden hair on the floor; and My

Lady Wind flew away moaning and shrieking into the night.

The golden hair never grew again, and when she went the next day to search for it in the dwarfs' house, behold! the curious little house had disappeared!

Since then she does not care at all what people think of her, but she wears a grey cloak and goes roaming through the world searching for the two evil little dwarfs who stole away her golden hair.

In the autumn-time when the woods are turning colour she thinks she sees it hidden under the golden leaves and she turns them over and over to find it. But she is most restless in March. For it is when the yellow daffodils come out and the sun sheds its clear spring rays over the fields and trees that she thinks she catches a real glimpse of it, and so she whirls on her way more madly than ever.

II

DAFFY-DOWN-DILLY

*Daffy-down-dilly has come to town
In a yellow petticoat and a green gown.*

OLD RHYME

THERE were once upon a time four hundred and fifty very young Princesses who lived in a kingdom underground.

They were none of them at all beautiful, for they were fat and brown, and as round as balls; moreover, they had each a number of long slender white feet on which they were able to stand very steadily.

They all lived quite close together and were very conversational, and they usually talked about what they would do when they grew up.

"How beautiful we shall all be then!" one would say to another; "so tall, so slender, and so elegant in our green gowns and frilled petticoats."

"Yes, indeed," a second would reply. "And what fun it will be when we go up to town and make our curtsies in front of the royal palace."

"Yes; and better still," a third would murmur, "a lusty, strong Knight will come and blow us kisses."

Thus they chattered and laughed together, and every day they grew a little taller, a little slimmer, and a little better looking.

"Let us send the Heralds up to town before us," said one. "They shall tell every one that we are coming."

"And they shall arrive close by the palace," said another, "so as to let every one know that we intend to make our curtsies there."

"Yes ; and people do say that the world above ground is very sad this year," said a third. "It is time for us to be up and about with all our cheery green dresses and frilled yellow petticoats."

So the Heralds arrived in town the very next morning and drew themselves up in rows in the royal gardens and park.

They were dressed in the very brightest colours, so as to attract as much attention as possible. Some wore white, some royal purple, but most of them were clad in the brightest possible orange.

Directly they had taken up their positions they all began to shout at the tops of their voices :

"The Princesses are coming ! The Princesses are coming !"

The people in town did not quite understand what they said, for they shouted in the language of the people underground, but every one noticed

their bright dresses, and guessed that they must be Heralds.

"The Princesses are coming! The Princesses are coming!" shouted they until their bright colours began to fade; and as for the lusty, strong Knight, no sooner did he set eyes on them than he began practising blowing kisses so furiously that there was quite a hurricane.

Then, one fine night, the four hundred and fifty Princesses arrived. Four hundred and fifty slim, green-clad ladies with their yellow petticoats neatly wrapped in brown cloaks.

Early the next morning they shook out their frills in the sunshine, and their green gowns and yellow frilled petticoats were soon spread wide for all the world to see.

The Heralds had faded away, but a blackbird in the tree-tops had called out:

"Come! Come! Come! The Princesses are here! Come! Do come! Do! Do! Do!"

Then all the people came to see them, and the Princesses bowed and curtsied in front of the palace from morning till night.

Best of all, the lusty, strong Knight came too, and blew his kisses, here there and everywhere among them.

And whoever saw the Princesses, even though they were sad at heart, came away feeling ever so much happier.

Thus the Princesses passed a sunny spring-

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time, until the days came when they had to return to their home underground.

But they will certainly come again; and of course you know that the way to the royal palace is by Kensington Gardens, and that the Heralds were the jolly little crocuses who come crowding there in the spring-time, and the lusty, strong Knight was the rough March wind, and as for the four hundred and fifty Princesses, why, they, of course, were the daffodils, whom this year we welcome more warmly than ever.

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APRIL

I. A FOOL'S STORY

II. SUNBEAMS

I

A FOOL'S STORY

To make you an April fool.

OLD FOLK 3

THERE was once upon a time a King who had never been made an April Fool. Every first of April the whole Court went about making April Fools of each other, but no one had ever dared to make an April Fool of the King.

The King himself was quite sad about it, and even went so far as to say that he would give half of his kingdom to any one who could make an April Fool of him.

"Dear me!" said the courtiers one to the other. "Fancy that!"

"Dear me!" said the Cook to Boots the Gardener's Boy. "Fancy that!"

"Dear me!" said Boots the Gardener's Boy to himself. "Only fancy that!"

And then everybody proceeded to forget all about it, except Boots the Gardener's Boy, and he never forgot anything.

The next first-of-April morning the King, who was very fond of gardening, went out with his own Royal Watering Can to water his

favourite plants, and Boots the Gardener's Boy followed him at a respectful distance with the hose. There was a hedge between them, and it was about ten minutes to twelve.

The King was allowing a few gentle drops to trickle down upon his favourite seedlings, when, all of a sudden, a shower of water came pouring down upon his head, sousing him, and his Water Can, and the seedlings too.

A voice behind the hedge cried out: "Throw away your can, your Majesty! It is pouring!"

"Why, so it is," said the King, "and quite a heavy shower too," and he threw the can with all his force over the hedge.

"Very extraordinary," continued the King to himself as he rubbed the water out of his eyes and looked about him. "Very extraordinary that it should rain so hard, for there is not a cloud in the sky!"

Just then the Palace Clock began to toll twelve.

"One! two! three!"—and a voice called suddenly:

"April Fool! April Fool!"

The shower of water ceased as abruptly as it had begun, and behold! Boots the Gardener's Boy came running from behind the hedge with the hose in one hand and the Royal Watering Can in the other.

"April Fool, your Majesty!" cried he. "And I pray you give me half the kingdom."

"Half the kingdom! Fiddlesticks!" said the King, who now that he had been made an April Fool, did not much like the feeling.

Then, all of a sudden, it really did begin to rain, a regular downpour, and somehow or other the King began to laugh, and Boots began to laugh too, and the long and the short of it was, that by the time the shower was over the King had promised Boots half his kingdom.

When the courtiers heard of it they were so astonished that all that they could say was:

"Dear me! Just fancy that!"

II

SUNBEAMS

*Hickamore, Hackamore,
On the King's kitchen door.
All the King's horses, and all the King's men
Could not get Hickamore, Hackamore,
Off the King's kitchen door.*

OLD RHYME

THERE was once upon a time a very gloomy King, who lived in a very gloomy castle. The castle had very thick walls, and very small windows that were never opened. It was surrounded on three sides by a dense forest of pine-trees, which grew close up to the castle, even up to the front door. On the fourth side there was only a low hedge, and from the kitchen door stretched a wide avenue, leading to the plain where stood the nearest city.

The King, of course, never went to the kitchen door, and hardly knew of the existence of the wide avenue, or of the city. He sat all day looking out at the dark, gloomy pine-trees in front of the castle, and he was always lonely and always sad.

The Lord High Chamberlain and all the lords

and ladies-in-waiting also had rooms in front of the castle, and they were all as gloomy as could be.

The only really merry person in the whole castle was the Kitchen-maid; but then she did her work by the open kitchen door, and often went down the avenue to the city to hear the news.

One fine April morning two dancing little strangers, dressed in bright yellow, came running up the avenue from the city to the King's castle. Instead of going to the front door, as strangers usually did, they came bouncing, bounding along to the open kitchen door, jumped one on the knocker and the other on the door handle, and began kicking at the door with all their might.

"Whoever are you?" said the Kitchen-maid, who was cleaning the boots in the doorway. "And what do you want?"

"I'm Hickamore," said one, standing on his head on the door handle.

"I'm Hackamore," said the other, turning a somersault through the knocker.

"And we want to see the King," said they both together; and then they began to run up and down the door with all their might. The Kitchen-maid did not seem at all surprised at this extraordinary behaviour. She began to laugh merrily, and said:

"Well, you won't see the King if you stay

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where you are. You will have to go round to the front door."

"But we are not going round to the front door," said they, "and we *are* going to stay where we are, and we *must* see the King." They ran up and down the kitchen door faster than before, now here, now there—bright spots of colour against the brown wood.

At this the little Kitchen-maid laughed more merrily than ever, and so loud that she attracted the attention of the Head Cook, who was busy cooking the King's favourite dish of stewed prunes.

"What's the matter?" said he.

"Oh," said the Kitchen-maid as well as she could for laughing, "it's Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on the King's kitchen door, and they want to see the King."

"Why don't they go round to the front door then?" said the Head Cook.

"They don't want to," said the Kitchen-maid.

The Head Cook was so astonished that, spoon in hand, he came out into the passage to see the two strangers. They were still running up and down the kitchen door as fast as ever they could. No sooner had the Head Cook set eyes on them than he burst out laughing.

"Good gracious me!" said he, and raising the big wooden spoon he was carrying he waved it in the air.

At this moment a Page-boy, who was coming into the kitchen to fetch the King's pudding, arrived at the other end of the passage.

He was a gloomy youth, with perfectly straight hair. When he saw the Head Cook at the kitchen door, waving his spoon in the air and laughing, he stopped still, with his mouth wide open, in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" said he.

"It's Hickamore and Hackamore," said the Head Cook, waving his spoon in the air more wildly than ever, "and they are on the King's kitchen door, and they want to see the King."

"Why don't they go round to the front door then?" asked the Page-boy, coming forward.

"They don't want to," said the Head Cook.

By this time the Page-boy had also come to the kitchen door.

Hickamore and Hackamore were still running up and down with all their might. No sooner did the Page-boy set eyes on them than *he* began to roar with laughter, and his straight hair began to curl.

"Well I never!" said he.

All this time the King was waiting for his dish of stewed prunes, and a lady-in-waiting was sent down to the kitchen to tell the Page-boy to hurry. She was a very gloomy lady, with stiff, starched petticoats and very stiff

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knees. As she came into the passage she saw the Page-boy standing at the kitchen door, doubled up with laughter, his hair curling all over his head!

"Whatever *is* the matter?" said she very stiffly.

"Oh, dear me! It is Hickamore and Hackamore!" said the Page-boy. "And they are on the King's kitchen door, and they want to see the King."

"Why do they not go to the front door then?" said the Lady-in-Waiting still more stiffly.

"They don't want to," laughed the Page.

The Lady-in-Waiting walked slowly down the passage to see the two queer strangers. Hickamore and Hackamore had never ceased running up and down the kitchen door as fast as ever they could go.

No sooner had the Lady-in-Waiting set eyes on them than *she* began to laugh. All the stiffness went out of her petticoats and out of her knees. She took the curly haired Page round the waist and danced with him all the way up the passage; and at the end of it they collided—bump!—with no less a personage than the Lord High Chamberlain himself, who had come down in person to see why the King had not yet got his dish of stewed prunes.

"I beg your pardon," said the Lady-in-Waiting, but she did not stop laughing.

"What is the matter?" said the Lord High Chamberlain, who was a terribly gloomy person, almost as gloomy as the King himself.

"If you please," said the Lady-in-Waiting, "it is Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on the King's kitchen door, and they want to see the King."

"Let them be shown round to the front door then!" said the Lord High Chamberlain in his most pompous manner.

"But they don't want to," said the Lady-in-Waiting.

"They will *have* to want to," answered the Lord High Chamberlain, striding down the passage to the kitchen door.

Hickamore and Hackamore had now resumed their original positions. One was standing on his head on the door handle, and the other was turning somersaults very fast through the knocker. For one whole minute the Lord High Chamberlain stared gloomily at them. Then, very slowly, a smile began to appear on his face. The smile grew broader and broader, and then "Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed he.

Then he gathered up his robes and skipped—yes, actually skipped!—along the passage, and upstairs to see the King.

He was followed by the Lady-in-Waiting, the Page-boy, and the Head Cook; but the Kitchen-maid stayed where she was and went on clean-

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ing the boots, and Hickamore and Hackamore began to run up and down the kitchen door again just as if nothing had happened.

All this time the King had been waiting in the banqueting-hall for his dish of stewed prunes. The banqueting-hall was very long, very low, and very dark. The pine-trees pressed close up against the windows, which were shut. The King sat at the end of the long banqueting-table with his head buried in his hands. He was surrounded by pages, courtiers, and ladies-in-waiting. They were all very gloomy and stiff, and kept their eyes fixed on the ground.

No one spoke a word.

Suddenly the door at the other end of the room burst open, and in skipped the Lord High Chamberlain! Behind him danced the Lady-in-Waiting, and her petticoats were soft and clinging! Behind her capered the Page-boy, and his hair curled all over his head! Behind him leapt the Head Cook, brandishing his wooden spoon in the air!

The King looked up without a smile on his face. The courtiers stared. The room, somehow, looked gloomier than ever.

Almost imperceptibly the Lord High Chamberlain dropped into a walk. The Lady-in-Waiting seemed to feel her knees growing stiff again. The Page-boy's hair began to uncurl. The Head Cook dropped his spoon with a clatter.

"Where are my prunes?" said the King wearily.

The Head Cook fled. So did the Page. So did the Lady-in-Waiting, shutting the door after her.

The Lord High Chamberlain stood alone in the middle of the floor, fidgeting from one foot to the other. Nobody spoke a word.

"Well?" said the King at last.

"Please, your Majesty," began the Lord High Chamberlain, "it is Hickamore and Hackamore, and they are on your kitchen door, and they want to see you."

"Let them come round to the front door then."

"They don't want to."

Another long silence.

"Send all my horses and all my men to fetch them!"

The Lord High Chamberlain bowed and left the room to find the General Commanding.

Immediately afterward the Page appeared, carrying the dish of stewed prunes. His hair was quite straight again. The Lady-in-Waiting followed him, and her knees were as stiff as ever, but there was just a hint of laughter in her eyes.

Meantime the little Kitchen-maid was still busy cleaning the boots, and Hickamore and Hackamore were enjoying themselves thoroughly on the kitchen door.

Presently along the avenue came the tramp, tramp, tramp of horses' hoofs. The Kitchen-maid looked up from her work, and laughed more merrily than ever.

Two and two they came—all the King's horses and all the King's men! The General Commanding rode in front of them on a beautiful white horse.

Hickamore and Hackamore paid not the slightest attention to any of them, but began an elaborate game of "Catch" up and down the King's kitchen door.

All the King's horses and all the King's men came nearer and nearer, and finally drew up in two long lines just opposite the kitchen door. A herald blew a long blast upon his trumpet. The General Commanding approached the kitchen door and saluted.

"We have come to escort you to the front door," said he; and then, all of a sudden, he began to roar with laughter, and his white horse under him started prancing and curveting in the most absurd manner imaginable.

Hickamore and Hackamore stopped their game of "Catch," and sat quite still side by side on the knocker, winking at the General. He raised his hand. This was the signal for arrest in that country.

Four of the King's horses and four of the King's men approached to arrest Hickamore

and Hackamore; but directly they set eyes upon the two little strangers the men began to laugh, and the horses grew so unmanageable that they could not get anywhere near the door!

Hickamore and Hackamore were still winking at the General. He held up his hand again, and another four horses and men came forward to try their luck—with the same result.

And so it went on. Every single horse and man had tried to get Hickamore and Hackamore off the King's kitchen door and had failed. There they still sat on the knocker, winking.

Then the men tried to dismount, so as to catch Hickamore and Hackamore on foot; but the horses all seemed bewitched, and they found it quite impossible.

The Lord High Chamberlain, who had been looking on at the whole scene from a top window, gave a signal to the General. All the King's horses and all the King's men retired—tramp! tramp! tramp!—the way they had come.

The Kitchen-maid went on with her boots again, and Hickamore and Hackamore started to run up the kitchen door just as if nothing had happened.

The Lord High Chamberlain came once more into the presence of the King. "Your Majesty," said he, "it is no use. All your horses and all your men cannot get them off the kitchen door!"

A long silence.

"Who saw them first?" asked the King.

"The Kitchen-maid," said the Lord High Chamberlain.

"Bring her here!" said the King.

In a few minutes the little Kitchen-maid was ushered into the royal presence. She was rosy and fresh, and she was still laughing.

"Who are these strangers?" said the King.

"Why, they are only two little sunbeams!" said the Kitchen-maid.

The King stared.

"How can I bring them in here?" he asked her.

"Cut down the pine-trees all round the castle, and open the windows, and you will see them in a twinkling," said she.

"Thank you," said the King. Then, turning to the Lord High Chamberlain, and speaking in a loud, clear voice, so that all might hear, he said :

"Cut down the pine-trees all round the castle, and open the windows!"

The Lord High Chamberlain bowed and left the room.

Then began such a hacking and a hewing and a sawing and a splitting as never had been heard in all that country-side! Every one from the city—indeed from the kingdom—came to help.

The pages and courtiers and ladies-in-waiting went to open the windows, and very stiff they found them.

At last every tree was down, and every window opened.

The sun streamed into the banqueting-hall.

The King rose from his throne like a man waking out of a dream. All the Court followed him. The exercise of opening the windows had made every one much less stiff and gloomy than before. The King went slowly down to the front door. He opened it.

In bounced Hickamore and Hackamore, one after the other!

"We have come in to see you at last!" cried they, and danced about his crown.

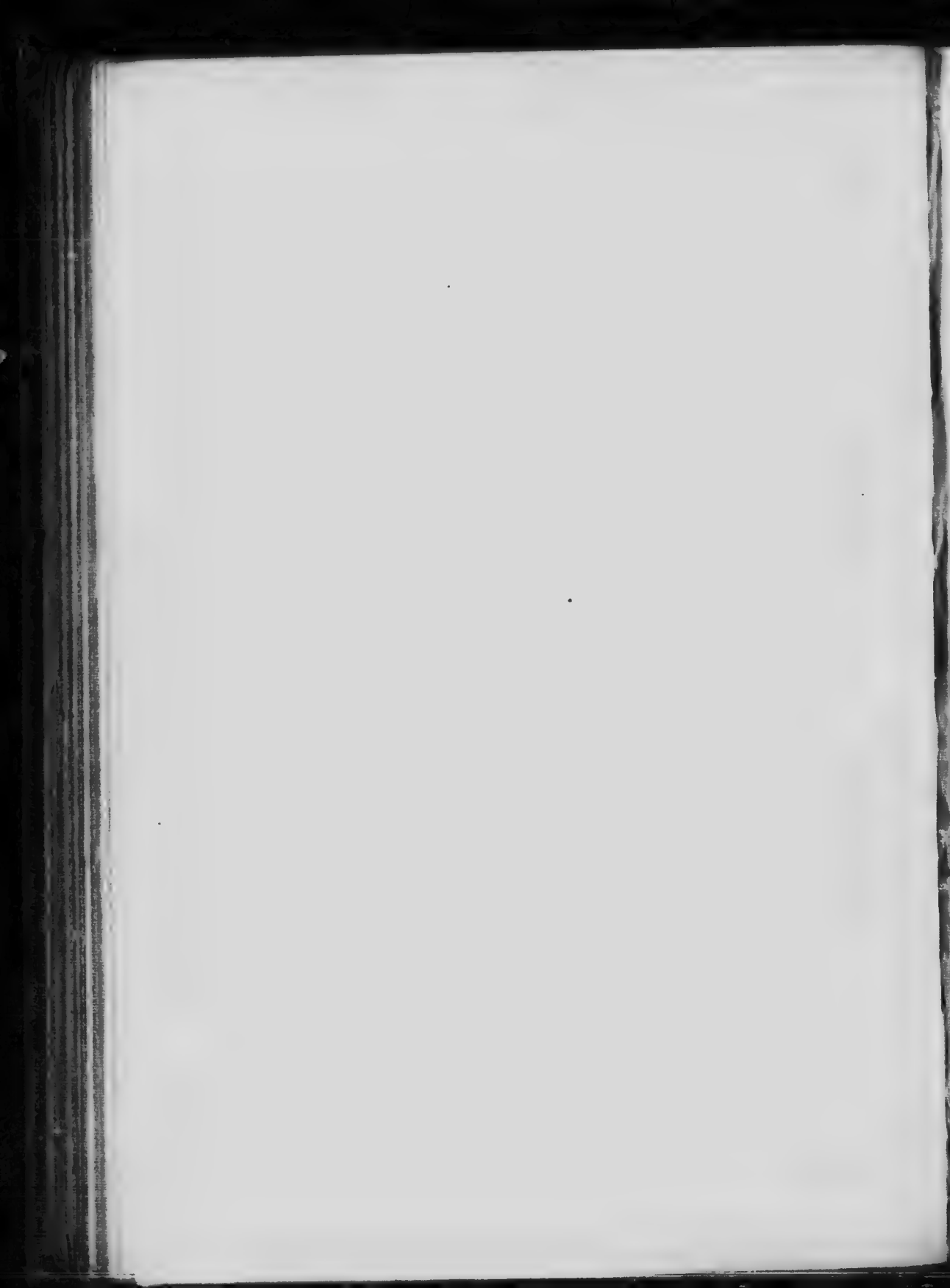
The door stood wide open. As the King looked out he thought he could see lots of other little Hickamores and Hackamores at their merry antics on the grass. Then he threw back his head and laughed aloud.

"Ha! ha! ha! Let us join them!" said he.

Out on to the lawn he danced, with all his Court after him, and the servants too. Never were seen such curly headed page-boys, such dainty, lively ladies-in-waiting, such merry cooks, above all, such a jovial Lord High Chamberlain, and such a fresh, rosy, smiling little Kitchen-maid.

Among them all, here, there, and everywhere, danced Hickamore and Hackamore.

For the little Kitchen-maid was quite right—they were only two little sunbeams!



MAY

I. A BRIGHT MAY MORNING

II. BLUEBELLS

I

A BRIGHT MAY MORNING

*Ride-a-cock-horse
To Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady
Ride on a white horse.
Rings on her fingers
And bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.*

OLD RHYME

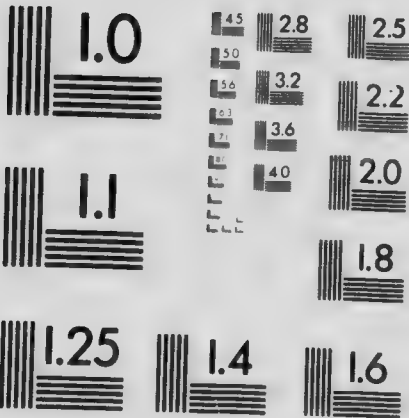
SILAS MARKHAM was as stern and rigid a Puritan as one could find in all the shire of Oxford. He lived just outside the town of Banbury, and, as his neighbours described him, he was as thin as a Banbury cheese.

Yet, Puritan as he was, those who stood near him at the psalm-singing would almost hold their breath to listen to his wonderful voice, even though there were not wanting some who thought that such sweet, mellow notes could only come from the devil. There was a kink in his hair too, which showed that it must have been curly once; and it was reported that no cavalier in all the land could sit a horse better than he.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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One fine May morning when the sun was shining brightly and the white clouds racing across the sky, Silas Markham sat in his little dark scriptorium writing a learned treatise upon Original Sin. Yet somehow or another he found that he could not keep his thoughts from wandering from his page and out of the little window to the green and blue outside.

Suddenly a cuckoo called from a neighbouring field—the first Silas had heard that year—and a child's voice began to pipe the old song :

"Summer is icumen in.
Loude syngge Cuckoo."

The pipe broke off in the middle, but Silas in his deep, beautiful voice finished the song, and into his head there rushed a sudden flood of memories which he had thought dead long since.

He pushed aside the papers from his desk, and still humming to himself the old tune, he touched a knob on one of the drawers in front of him. The drawer sprang open, and revealed a long shelf on which was resting a curiously shaped wooden object folded in what had been some brightly coloured silk material. Behind the shelf was a very small drawer in which lay a round, white parcel. The wooden object was a child's hobby-horse, the white parcel contained the remains of a mouldy cake, pastry on the outside, full of currants within.

Silas looked long and steadily at these curious objects. At last his features relaxed into a rare smile. Then, resting his head on his hands, he sat for fully an hour, thinking, dreaming back into the past.

He saw himself, a curly headed, blue-eyed lad of ten, with a voice like a thrush, and his school-fellow, the innkeeper's son, brave in a bright red suit and doublet. He saw the jolly innkeeper at the Reindeer, and the mugs of good brown ale. He saw Banbury as it was in the old days before the old Cross was taken down in the market-place. He saw his father, as stern and thin as he himself was now. His mother he did not see, for she had died when he was born. Above all, and dominating all, he saw that gallant May morning when the Queen herself had passed through Banbury on her way to Oxford.

"Father, there is news in the town. Her Majesty Queen Bess passeth through to-morrow. We are all to assemble round the Cross at Banbury. They say she is indeed a fine lady, with rings on her fingers, and, for aught I know, bells on her toes—and Master Whitmore giveth Richard the black horse that he may ride to meet her, wilt thou give me a horse too?"

"Nay, nay, Silas, my son. Thou wilt stay at

home and mind thy books. Thou canst ride cock-horse to Banbury Cross, but other horse thou'lt never get from me."

The boy, undaunted, proceeded with his great news: "They say she loveth music too, and Master Melliegrew hath taught us a merry song wherewith to greet her, and 'tis I that am chosen to sing it. Listen!" And Silas began:

"Summer is icumen in.
Loude syng Cuckoo."

"Thy singing is an abomination!" interrupted his father. "If thou needst must sing, let it be spiritual psalms and hymns, not the gaudy gew-gaws of the profane. I will see to it that Master Melliegrew teacheth thee no more such."

But even this did not check Silas. "Ay, and they say that we may ask the Queen for whatever we may wish, and she will give it to us—and I, I shall ask for a cake full of currants, a true Banbury Cake, the like of which thou, father, wilt not allow me here. Oh, father, thou must lend me the grey mare, that I, too, may ride to meet her."

"Think not on what thou shalt eat or drink," answered his father sternly. "And as for the grey mare, thou canst not go gadding to-morrow, but must mind thy books. A cock-horse thou mayest ride an it pleaseth thee." With which

repeated attempt at humour the conversation ended.

But Silas had taken him at his word, and had run out immediately into the wood-shed to fashion a hobby-horse.

He worked at it all that day, and was delighted when he found in an old cupboard a piece of one of his mother's dresses with which to make the skirt. His only pattern was the memory of the mummer's hobby-horse, which, unknown to his father, he had seen in the parlour of the Reindeer Inn at Christmas-time. Before he went to bed that evening the hobby-horse was finished.

Then came the sunny, golden morning, the day of days, that seen even now through the long, dark vista of years still shone out framed in golden light.

With the blue sky above him, and the birds carolling round him, flowers in the hedgerows, lambs in the meadows, Silas, curly haired and bare-headed, trotted along the road to Banbury on his hobby-horse.

The space and steps round the Cross in the centre of the market-place were thronged with people. Bright-coloured broideries hung from the windows. Master Whitmore stood at his inn door. Richard Whitmore, in a scarlet suit, came dashing up the high street on the black horse. Master Melliegrew was marshalling the

schoolboys into line. Silas, escaping his watchful eye, ensconced himself on the farther side of the Cross to await the coming of her Gracious Majesty the Queen.

He had not long to wait. The steady tramp, tramp of horses' feet announced her approach, and soon the procession came in sight, flags flying, trumpets blowing.

Silas, on his hobby-horse, stood as though in a dream, his eyes fixed on the one glorious figure that was gradually approaching. His impression was of something all gold like the sun.

The stiff collar edged with gold, the glorious golden-embroidered dress, the bright gold hair, the flashing gold rings on her fingers, the golden bells on the harness of her beautiful white horse. The sun glinted and glittered on her shining dress. The crowd shouted: "Long live the Queen!"

Driven by some inner impulse, Silas pushed forward. Forgetful of his queer, home-made hobby-horse, thinking only that here was his Queen and that he had a song to sing her, he galloped straight up to the Royal Procession and came to a halt just in front of the Queen's white horse.

She drew in her rein and smiled graciously down at the queer little figure in front of her.

As she smiled Silas began to sing, and all

the crowd was silent, listening to the clear, sweet, boy's voice :

"Summer is icumen in.
Loude syng Cuckoo,
Groweth seed and bloweth mead
And springeth wood anew.
Sing Cuckoo.
Ewe bleateth after lamb,
Loud after Calf the coo.
Bullock starteth,
Bucke verteth,
Marry sing Cuckoo,
Cuckoo, Cuckoo.
Well singest thou, Cuckoo,
So sweet thou never knew."

When he had finished there were tears in the Queen's eyes.

"Lad," said she, "would that I could have such sweet music as thine wherever I go. What wilt thou ask of us as a reward?"

"I would have a cake full of currants," answered Silas, by no means abashed.

The Queen laughed merrily.

"Let some one fetch him such a cake!" said she.

So a gay, laughing courtier went off to Mistress Pelham the bakeress and came back with the cake carefully wrapped up in a white cloth.

He gave the little package to the Queen. "It is a Banbury Cake, your Majesty," said he, "and full of currants."

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"Take it," said the Queen as she bent down from her saddle, and with her own white hand sparkling with rings she handed the package to Silas. He, scarce knowing what he did, kissed the hand and the rings too.

"And why wert thou so anxious for a cake with currants?" said she.

"My father is a Puritan," answered Silas.

The Queen frowned.

"Tell thy father," said she, "to enjoy the good things in this fair world, for they will brighten his path on to the next.—And now let us proceed!" she cried imperiously.

So the gorgeous procession passed on, and Silas was left in the middle of the road on his hobby-horse, staring after the cavalcade, with the cake firmly clasped in his right hand.

And there the sunshine ended.

On his return his father had taken the hobby-horse and cake from him and locked them in the drawer whence he had only taken them long years afterward; and he had been sent to a darkened room to reflect in solitude upon the wickedness of disobedience and frivolity.

It seemed to Silas that since that day his whole life had been the life of one in a darkened room.

He once more turned to the window and opened it wide.

The sunshine streamed in, the cuckoo's note sounded clear across the fields, "Summer is icumen in," piped the boy outside.

Silas left books and papers and went outside too. "Thou wert right," said he, recalling once again the Queen's words. "Let us enjoy together the good things in this fair world, for surely they will brighten our path on to the next."

II

BLUEBELLS

Bluebells from the clearings.

W. E. HENLEY

THERE was once upon a time a beautiful Princess who had been stolen away by an old Witch.

The old Witch's cottage stood at the edge of a Magic Wood into which the Princess had never been allowed to enter.

On a certain day in May, which happened to be her fifteenth birthday, the Princess was suddenly filled with an intense longing to go back to her old home.

She begged and she prayed so prettily that at last the Witch said :

"Well, lassie, if you have the courage to go alone to the clearing in the middle of the Magic Wood, and sleep there by yourself all night, maybe I will think about letting you go home. But if you dream anything you must promise to tell your dream to me."

Well, the Princess promised that, and the very next night she went alone to the clearing in the middle of the Magic Wood.

The clearing was a soft greensward ringed round with great silver-trunked beeches. It was carpeted all over with fairy-like anemones that shone in the moonlight like delicate white stars.

"Just as if the stars had dropped out of the sky," thought the Princess. "How beautiful they are. Surely no harm can befall me here."

So she gathered together a little pillow of moss and, lying down among the anemones, she was soon fast asleep.

She had not been sleeping very long before the anemones raised their starlike heads, and, moving gracefully toward her on their slender stalks, joined their long green hands together and danced about her in a ring.

Then twelve of the most beautiful bent their heads to the ground and the others cut them off with swords made of bluebell leaves. Then with the anemone heads they made a crown and gently placed it on the Princess's head.

It was a crown of stars.

"We give ourselves to make a crown for thee," they said, and then they went back to their places on the greensward.

The next morning the Princess went back to the Witch.

"I dreamt I had a crown of stars," said she.

"Is *that* all?" said the Witch. "You will certainly have to abide here another year."

At the end of the next year the Princess once

more begged and prayed the old Witch to let her go home, and the Witch said :

"Well, if you have the courage to go and sleep all by yourself again in the clearing in the middle of the Magic Wood, maybe I'll think about it. But if you dream anything you must promise to tell your dream to me."

Well, the Princess promised that, and the very next night she went alone to the clearing.

This year it was more beautiful than ever, for it was carpeted all over with yellow primroses that shone like golden rings.

"It looks just as if little round moons had fallen out of the sky," thought the Princess.

Once again she laid herself down on the soft moss and was soon fast asleep.

She had not been lying there very long before the primroses rose on their slender stalks and, taking each a leaf for a fan, moved slowly round the Princess, fanning her as they passed, and the air was fragrant with their soft, sweet scent.

Then twelve beautiful little primrose buds bent their heads and the others cut them off with swords of bluebell leaves, and with the primrose buds they made a tiny ring and slipped it on to the Princess's finger.

It was a ring of gold.

"We give ourselves to make a ring for thee," they whispered, and then they returned to their places on the greensward.

The next morning the Princess went back to the old Witch.

"I dreamt I had a ring of gold," said she.

"Is *that* all?" said the old Witch. "Then you must certainly abide here another year."

So another year passed, and once more the Princess begged and prayed the old Witch to let her go home.

"Well, lassie, you must sleep yet again by yourself in the Magic Wood, and maybe after that I will let you go; but if you should dream anything you must promise to tell your dream to me."

Well, the Princess promised that, and the very next night she went again alone to the clearing in the middle of the Magic Wood.

This time the clearing was even more beautiful than before, for it was one mass of bluebells. They hung down over the mossy ground like a blue cloud, and all their little heads were swaying in the breeze, and there was at the very faintest sound in the wood, like the ding-dong of wedding bells heard a very long way off.

"Why, the sky itself seems to have fallen to the earth this time," thought the Princess to herself. "How beautiful the bluebells are!" and, lying down among them, she was soon fast asleep.

She had not been sleeping very long before the bluebells all began to sway to and fro on

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their green stalks, and to ring: "Ding-dong, ding-dong! Ding-dong, ding-dong!"

So they rang on all through the night, and as they rang they whispered:

"We ring our wedding bells for thee! We ring our wedding bells for thee!"

Then, just before dawn, the magic ringing ceased.

The next morning the Princess went back to the old Witch.

"I dreamt I heard wedding bells," said she.

"Go then," said the old Witch, "and haste you home to your father's house. It is time you were there."

So the Princess went back to her father's kingdom; and there, awaiting her, was a handsome Prince.

"I have brought you a crown of stars," said he, and placed it on her head.

"And I have brought you a ring of gold," said he, and placed it on her finger.

"And I have ordered our wedding bells to be rung," said he, and they began to peal throughout the country-side.

So that very day they were married, and lived happily ever after, and the Princess's wedding nosegay was made all of anemones, and primroses, and bluebells.

JUNE

- I. THE MAN IN THE MOON
- II. BUTTERCUPS
- III. THE TWO PRINCESSES

I

THE MAN IN THE MOON

*The Man in the Moon
Came down too soon,
And asked the way to Norwich.
He went by the south,
And burnt his mouth
With eating cold pease porridge.*

OLD RHYME

ONCE upon a time the Man in the Moon was much more alive than he is now, and the Moon was a very different place from what it is to-day.

In those days the Moon was an upside-down country. This resulted in a very extraordinary state of things. For instance—all hot things were cold; and all black things were white; and when you wanted to go north you went south; and when you wanted to go upstairs you went down; and you went to bed all day and got up all night; and all the sea was dry and all the land was wet; and you put up your umbrella when the sun was shining, and went for walks in the pouring rain; and you had lessons all through the holidays, and holidays all through lesson-time; and before you went

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to bed you had breakfast; and when you got up you had supper!

All this would have been exceedingly puzzling to you or me, but the Man in the Moon was so used to it that he took it quite as a matter of course.

Once a year, however, upon a certain Thursday in June, the Man in the Moon became an ordinary mortal, and was allowed to come down to earth for a whole day, and to wander about at will. Perhaps some of you have been awake on one of those days when the moon is shining so brightly that it is almost like daylight—on such a day as that the Man in the Moon would probably be wandering about the earth somewhere.

He used usually to visit the cathedral towns, because he could see the cathedral spires so well from the moon. And thus it happened that any cathedral town where there was a tall pointed spire was sure, sooner or later, to be visited by the Man in the Moon.

On one particular June Thursday the Man in the Moon determined to visit Norwich. He knew the Norwich spire well, for he had often been quite close to it, it was so tall and pointed. Not far from the Cathedral there stood on a high mound the old Castle, and in the Castle, as the Man in the Moon knew very well, was a Prison. Many a time he had looked in at the Prison windows and seen the Gaoler busy

about his work, and the Gaoler's daughter, Annette, walking about the little Prison garden, sighing as she thought of the poor prisoners.

The Man in the Moon had watched her, too, when she went to the great Cathedral to pray, and sometimes she had looked up at him through the great Cathedral windows, and he had smiled down at her. They were great friends were Annette and the Man in the Moon.

Of this friendship, however, the Gaoler knew nothing, until the Sunday before that particular Thursday when the Man in the Moon intended to visit Norwich in person.

On that Sunday the Mayor of Norwich, old and wealthy, arrived at the Castle and demanded the Gaoler's daughter's hand in marriage.

"I am sorry I cannot marry you," said she, with a low curtsy.

"And why not, pray?" asked the Mayor of Norwich.

"Because I would rather marry the Man in the Moon," said she.

"Rubbish!" interrupted the Gaoler, who was present at the interview. "Man in the Moon indeed! Why, you don't know him, and, anyway, you can't marry a person that doesn't exist!"

"Oh yes, I do know him," answered Annette. "We are great friends, the Man in the Moon and I, and in any case I would rather marry a

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person that does not exist, than be wife to a horrible, fat, old man like the Mayor."

"Your daughter seems to have very strange ideas, and no manners," said the Mayor of Norwich, highly offended. "She had better be put in prison until such time as she is in a better frame of mind," and, with a haughty bow, he turned and left the Castle.

So the Gaoler clapped Annette into prison; and there she sat, with nothing to eat but cold pease porridge, and nothing to drink but plain cold water, and nothing to think about but the Man in the Moon. That night he peeped at her through the prison bars and sent her a message that he would come down and carry her off on the very next Thursday, which was the day he was due to change into an ordinary mortal.

But he had reckoned without the cold pease porridge!

Now cold pease porridge is exceedingly nasty, and Annette had been accustomed to the daintiest of fare. As the days wore on the cold pease porridge became more and more distasteful to her, so that by the time it got to Tuesday she was almost inclined to tell her father that she would marry the Mayor, in order that she might never have to taste cold pease porridge again as long as she lived.

"Oh dear," sighed she, leaving the hated porridge untasted on the bare wooden table,

and leaning her little face close against the bars of the window. "Oh dear, oh dear, it is so very nasty! Dear Man in the Moon, cannot you possibly come down to-night and fetch me away? I really cannot wait till Thursday."

"My dearest," whispered the Man in the Moon, "do eat it up, and the day after to-morrow I will come, and you shall be free to eat whatever you like for the rest of your days."

"I cannot, indeed I cannot," said she. "I will tell my father that I would rather wed the Mayor."

"No, that you shall *never* do, if I can help it!" said the Man in the Moon. "I will come down and fetch you this very moment."

And—plop!—down he came!

But he had rather miscalculated his direction, and when he arrived on the earth he found to his consternation that he was nowhere near Norwich. Also, he had come down too soon, so he was not in the least an ordinary mortal, and did not look like one. In fact very few people could see him at all, and were exceedingly surprised when a voice addressed them out of nowhere; and if they did catch a glimpse of him they would have certainly thought him rather peculiar.

It was the middle of the day and quite fine, and he was dressed in his best white night suit. In one hand he carried a big umbrella

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and in the other a great white candlestick, and on his feet he wore india-rubber goloshes several sizes too large.

"Excuse me," said the Man in the Moon with his best bow to the nearest passer-by, "but can you tell me the way to Norwich?"

The passer-by stared vacantly about him, but he could see no one. The sun was shining brightly, and above him was a clear blue sky in which was sailing the empty white moon that one sometimes sees by daylight. He noticed that there was no Man in it.

"Excuse me!" said the Man in the Moon again, and repeated his question.

"I thought some one asked me the way to Norwich," said the passer-by. "It's a long way from here; due north, I should say."

"Thank you," said the Man in the Moon with another bow, and he began walking as due south as he could possibly go.

He walked on and on, the sun was now high in the sky, and yet he came no nearer to Norwich. In course of time he found that his road led him straight into the sea.

"How odd," said the Man in the Moon; "I must have been going in the wrong direction," and he turned straight round and walked back the way he had come.

This time, quite by accident, and just as the sun was setting, he found himself in Norwich.

Yes, there was the Cathedral, he recognized the spire perfectly, though it seemed much taller than when he used to look at it from the Moon.

He made his way to the Castle and soon found himself outside Annette's prison window.

He peeped in.

There sat Annette, weeping bitterly, for the sun was setting, and she thought the Man in the Moon had not come. On the table in front of her was the plate of cold pease porridge—untasted. The Man in the Moon had been walking all day and was exceedingly hungry. The sight of the pease porridge positively made his mouth water.

"Annette," whispered he, putting the candlestick on the window-sill and carefully shutting his umbrella.

Annette sprang up and came to the window.

"Oh, is it you at last!" said she, and then she paused. "How queer you look, not a bit like what I expected," she added hastily, "but I am very glad to see you all the same."

"My dear Annette, let us go," said he; "but as I have been walking all day, and we have a long journey in front of us, I should be exceedingly grateful if you would give me a mouthful of your pease porridge before we start."

"A mouthful! Why, you shall have it all!" said she, and she pushed the plate of pudding through the bars.

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To ordinary mortals the pudding was cold, quite cold, and clammy; but the Man in the Moon was not an ordinary mortal, he had come down too soon.

He put a large piece of the pudding in his mouth, and then let forth such a roar that the whole Castle, and indeed the whole town, rang with it.

"What's the matter!" shrieked Annette, terrified.

"Oh! oh! oh! Ow! ow! ow! The p-pudding. It is so hot! I've burnt my mouth! I've burnt my mouth!" roared the Man in the Moon, jumping all over the courtyard in his goloshes and howling with pain. "Oh! oh! oh! Ow! ow! ow!"

The Gaoler came rushing into Annette's room.

"What on earth is the matter?" said he.

"Oh, it's the Man in the Moon," answered Annette, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry. "He has burnt his mouth with eating cold pease porridge."

"Burnt his mouth with eating cold pease porridge! Man in the Moon! The child is mad," said the Gaoler. "There is nobody here—nobody at all. You had much better put an end to all this nonsense by marrying the Mayor."

"Very well, I will," said Annette in a strange, quiet voice.

But there must have been somebody there after all. Because, when one of the warders was going his rounds the next day, he found a big umbrella outside Annette's window and a large white candlestick on the window-sill.

As for the Man in the Moon, he had gone home as fast as ever he could. He hardly ever came to earth after that, even on the Thursday in June. Though when the Maycress of Norwich was more than usually pale and sad and went to pray at night by herself in the great Cathedral, he would look sadly down at her through the long windows, and she would smile at him sometimes on her silent way home.

II

BUTTERCUPS

La prairie où on trouve la clef d'or, la clef des grandes rêveries.

MAURICE BARRÉS

THERE was once upon a time a Wise Woman who lived in a little cottage in the middle of a Buttercup Field.

One evening in June, when the buttercups were all shining in the sun as golden as could be, a weary Knight came riding up to the cottage door and asked for lodging.

His horse was spent and worn, and the Knight himself was blood-stained with hard fighting, and dusty with hard riding.

There were a couple of beehives in the little cottage garden and roses clambering over the door. The bees hummed lazily, the air was fragrant with the sweet scent of the roses, and all around lay the buttercups—so bright that they made the Knight's tired eyes blink as he looked on them.

But the door of the cottage was shut.

"A night's lodging," said the Wise Woman from the little window overhead. "Aye, ye may certainly have a night's lodging. But first ye

must find the key of the door and let yourself in."

"And where shall I find the key?" asked the Knight.

"Oh, over in the Buttercup Field yonder," answered she.

"And what is the key like?" asked the Knight.

"Sure it's a golden key," answered she, and with that she shut the window.

So the Knight tied his horse to the gate-post and went to look for the golden key in the field of buttercups.

Never had man a harder task, for the buttercups were all so golden that they looked each one like a key of gold.

The Knight searched and searched among the yellow flowers, but of the golden key he could find never a trace.

The evening wore on and the Knight's boots were all yellow with the dust of the buttercups, and gold, gold, gold danced before his eyes.

A stream flowed along one edge of the field and the reeds by its banks flapped and rustled in the evening breeze. The sun was fast sinking and sent its long, straight rays across the water on to the golden field.

The Knight sank down wearily by the stream-side with the buttercups all about him like a yellow counterpane.

"I shall never find it," he said, nestling his

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head among the buttercups, and their golden flowers were reflected on his face, making that look golden too.

As he lay there he forgot all about the fighting, and the dusty road, and his own weariness, and he thought a beautiful lady dressed in yellow bent over him and placed a little golden key in his hand.

As though in a dream he followed her, and lo! the golden key fitted into the lock of the little house and he went in.

Inside the house there was a little boy in a blue pinafore just like the picture of himself they had at home. His arms were full of buttercups, and he said to the beautiful lady: "See, mother, what lovely flowers I've brought you." Then she took the flowers and held them under his little chubby chin. "Well," she said, smiling, "well, do you like butter?" "Yes, yes," said the little boy. "Am I yellow now?"

Then she kissed him and put the flowers in a jug, and then slowly, but very slowly, because there was so much to say, she put him to bed.

"Good-night, my sweet," she said. "God bless you."

"Good-night, mother," said he. "God bless you," and she tucked him in with a yellow counterpane, and put out the light—and just one little star peeped in at him through the

crack in the window curtains. In the half light before he went to sleep he looked round the room so as to be quite sure that everything was safe. The green clock ticking on the mantelpiece, with the china dogs one on each side of it. His clothes all neatly folded on the chair at the foot of his bed, and his two little shoes side by side underneath. The rocking-horse without a tail, by the window. The low wicker chair by the fireplace, with his mother's work-basket beside it. The rows of books on the shelf, even their colours fading now. The angel picture over the fireplace, and the soldier picture by the door, and then—darkness, save for the bright little star peeping through the window curtains. Then the sudden barking of old Jock down below, and the feel of the comfy, soft, sweet-smelling sheets, and at last—silence and soft, dreamless sleep. . . .

When the Knight roused himself the sun was shining brightly on the golden buttercups, but it was the sun of another day.

He rose refreshed and strong, and his eyes were bright.

He went up to the cottage with a bunch of buttercups in his hand.

"Did you find the key?" said the Wise Woman from the window.

"Aye, marry, that I did!" said he, as he handed her the buttercups.

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So she opened the door and gave both him and his horse some breakfast, and he rode forth on his way rejoicing.

But the field of buttercups still holds the golden key for any one who cares to find it.

III

THE TWO PRINCESSES

Choose a wife rather by your ear than your eye.

OLD PROVERB

THERE were once two Princesses called Leontine and Philomella who lived together with their old Nurse in a fine Castle on the top of a hill.

One day, when they were about fifteen years old, their old Nurse, who was so wise that many people thought she was a fairy, called them both to her.

"My dearies," she said, "I have knowledge that a great and rich Prince is coming here from a far country to seek the hand of one of you in marriage. I cannot tell which of you he will choose. Look! Here is his picture," and she drew out of a case a little portrait of a fair, dashing Prince with curly hair and smiling blue eyes.

As they looked at the portrait Leontine thought to herself, "I wonder if he will like me best. I hope so," and Philomella thought, "He will never choose me, I am not nearly pretty enough, or good enough."

When they had gazed their fill at the portrait

the old Nurse put it away, and, looking steadily at the two Princesses, she said :

“ You may now go and wander in the garden, and if, just as the sun is setting, you see anything you would like to resemble, or whose gifts you would like to possess, you have only to curtsy three times to the setting sun and say, ‘ I wish—so-and-so,’ and it shall be yours for ever and ever. Choose carefully and well, for the Prince comes to-morrow.”

So the two Princesses went out into the garden ; and Leontine walked proudly along one of the beautiful stone terraces, but Philomella ran swiftly down the hill-side to a tiny wood she knew of, where a little stream went tinkling along beside the path.

Then slowly the sun began to set, and Leontine, on the Terrace, saw coming toward her in all his splendour one of the glorious peacocks that belonged to the Castle. His tail was spread wide, showing a hundred eyes, his flashing neck arched proudly, the sun’s rays lit up his gorgeous colouring.

Fixing her eyes on the beautiful bird, Leontine made three sweeping curtsies to the setting sun. “ I wish I had the beauty and the proud bearing of yonder peacock,” said she.

Philomella, in the little wood, sat down on a moss-covered stone beside the stream, and the sun’s rays fell on her face and hair.

Above her head a nightingale began to sing so sweetly and so sadly that her eyes filled with tears. His voice thrilled the wood, but on looking about her she could catch no sight of him.

Philomella rose from the stone and made three little curtsies to the setting sun. "I wish I had the modesty and the beautiful voice of yonder nightingale," said she.

"Have you chosen?" said the old Nurse when the two Princesses returned to the Castle.

"I have chosen," said Philomella in a low, sweet voice.

But Leontine only deigned to make answer with a haughty nod of her head, and it would have been hard to find a Princess more beautiful than she.

The next morning the two Princesses awaited the arrival of the Prince.

Leontine, dressed in her most gorgeous clothes, with a train of gold brocade, golden slippers, and a golden crown, caused a throne to be erected in the Banqueting Hall of the Castle, and, with several pages around her, prepared to receive the Prince in state.

Philomella, who, to all appearance, seemed quite to have forgotten about the Prince, sat in her own little room spinning; and ever as she spun she sang a soft, sweet, happy song that floated out of the little open window into the still air.

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At noon with a flourish of trumpets the Prince was announced. He was even more gallant and noble-looking than in his picture. He went straight into the Banqueting Hall, and was immediately confronted with the dazzling beauty of the Princess Leontine. Never in all his life, he thought, had he seen so beautiful a Princess.

She held out one hand for him to kiss. In the other she carried a golden mirror studded with gems, into which she glanced from time to time.

The Prince sat himself down beside her. She spoke very little, but the Prince noted every turn of her lovely head, every glitter of her sparkling eyes.

A banquet was spread before them, and the Prince was so busy gazing at the fair Princess Leontine that he did not notice that the Princess Philomella had entered the room.

It was only when she curtsied and said softly, "Welcome," that something in the sound of her voice made him turn his head and give her greeting, but the dazzling beauty of the other Princess at his side soon recalled his attention. At the end of the banquet the Princess Philomella slipped out of the hall and back to her own room and her spinning-wheel, without his having so much as noticed that she had gone.

"Are not these pretty shoes?" said the Princess Leontine, pointing and arching her dainty feet.

"Come out on to the Terrace with me," urged the Prince.

She disdainfully turned away her head, but finally allowed herself to be persuaded, and they went together on to the Terrace.

The scent of the roses, the soft green grass, the daisies by the border, the peacocks strutting here and there, the turrets of the Castle above their heads, the beauty of the Princess at his side, all combined to make so wonderful a picture that the Prince was in raptures. He asked her many questions and told her about his home and his Castle, and did not notice that she was far more occupied in looking at herself in her golden mirror than in listening to him.

At last, just as they reached the end of the Terrace, he ceased talking. From somewhere inside the Castle came the low humming whir of a spinning-wheel, and above the whir a low, sweet song, lovelier than any the Prince had ever heard.

"Listen!" he said to the Princess Leontine. "The music is telling you all I was trying to say—about myself, and my home, and that I should like to gaze on you always, always, always!"

The voice in the turret above them rose and fell. The Prince listened spell-bound.

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"Ha! I can sing too!" cried the Princess Leontine, and she began to sing in a harsh, screeching voice.

"Stop! Stop!" cried the Prince. "I wish only to look at you. Come! let us take this little path to the wood yonder."

"Oh, dear me, no!" said the Princess. "I never go there. It would soil my shoes. If you want to be with me you must stay always on the Terrace. But if you care to go to the other parts of the garden alone, go by all means."

With these words she walked proudly into the Castle, for she was offended that the Prince had not admired her singing, and she refused to see him for the rest of the day.

So he wandered about the garden alone, thinking only of her loveliness, and toward evening he found himself by the stream-side in the little wood.

As he was walking along, he suddenly heard behind him the self-same voice that he had heard that morning from the turret. Sweet and low it sounded through the wood—sweet and low and sad.

The Prince turned in the direction of the sound. "Whoever it is that is singing, show yourself!" cried he. "For your music is the loveliest thing in the world, and I would have it with me always, always, always!"

But, search as he might through the wood, he could find no one.

And thus it happened for several days.

In the mornings the Prince would gaze upon the loveliness of the Princess Leontine; in the evenings he would search the wood for the owner of the beautiful voice whom he never found.

But gradually the Princess Leontine grew more and more disappointing. It was true that she was as lovely as ever, but she seemed to grow daily prouder and vainer. As the days went on he cared to spend less and less time on the Terrace, and more and more time in the wood.

One morning when he was walking on the Terrace as usual with the Princess Leontine, he heard once again the humming whir of a spinning-wheel from a turret above their heads.

"Who is spinning up there?" he asked the Princess.

"Oh, that is only Philomella," said the Princess Leontine disdainfully. "She is always busy doing something or other.

"What is she like?" said the Prince. "I do not think I have ever seen her."

"Well, she comes down to dinner every day. If you did not see her you must be blind," said the Princess, "or perhaps you were too busy looking at me," added she proudly.

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"I was," said the Prince. "I will go and see her now."

"And leave me on the Terrace!" said the Princess Leontine in astonishment.

"I *may* come back to you, Princess!" said he, kissing her hand.

"Oh, very well," said the Princess Leontine. "You won't find *her* much to look at!" and, twirling her mirror, she sauntered away.

So the Prince went indoors, and, guided by the hum of the spinning-wheel, he first ran up the wide main staircase of the Castle, and then up a twisted little turret stairway, till he came to a small closed door—and there he paused.

For above the hum of the spinning-wheel he could hear the same low song that he had heard the first day he came to the Castle, the same song he had heard every evening in the little wood, the song that had come to mean more to him than even the beauty of Princess Leontine.

He held his breath to listen. The sweet, low voice sang on, telling of all the things the Prince had ever loved, his home, the trees, the flowers, the clouds, the streams—and then it grew sadder and lonelier; and there were tears in the Prince's eyes when finally, with a deep sigh, the song stopped altogether.

Softly the Prince opened the door. There sat the little Princess Philomella; before her was

her spinning-wheel; behind her a half-finished white satin pearl-embroidered dress.

When she saw the Prince she gave a startled look round the room and half rose as if she would run away.

"Nay, do not go," said he, "but tell me what you are doing here."

"I am spinning and embroidering a wedding dress for the Princess Leontine," said she softly.

"And who is she going to marry?" asked he.

"Why, you!" said the Princess Philomella still more softly, and then she began to sing again, and her song was even sadder and sweeter than before.

The Prince knelt down beside her.

"No," said he, "she's not going to marry me, for I have not asked her. I am going to marry some one else."

The Princess stopped spinning and looked at him. It struck him that she was very pretty, almost prettier than the Princess Leontine. He wondered why he had never really noticed her before.

"And who are you going to marry then?" asked she in an even lower voice, so low that it was almost a whisper.

"You, if you will have me," said he.

So they were married and lived happily ever

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after, and the Princess Leontine was quite content to sit on the Terrace and admire herself in her looking-glass for ever.

As for the old Nurse, she disappeared directly after the wedding, and has never been seen or heard of again from that day to this !

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JULY

- I. SWEET LAVENDER
- II. THE PRINCESS AND
THE CUCUMBERS

I

SWEET LAVENDER

*Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle,
Lavender's green,
When I am King, diddle, diddle,
You shall be Queen.*

OLD SONG

THERE was once upon a time a long garden path that was bordered on each side with great lavender bushes.

In July, when the lavender was out in bloom, this sunny, fragrant path was the favourite haunt of all the garden creatures, and the lavender bushes were a cloud of blue above and a soft green covering beneath. Every day at noon when the sun was full out, the bees and the bluebottles and the butterflies all betook themselves to the lavender walk, and there was such a whirring and a buzzing and a humming and a flittering in the sunshine that it almost made your eyes quiver.

Even the little wood-louse, who lived under the bashes, crawled out, sometimes into the sun-baked pathway to see the fun and smell the sweet lavender.

On one such day the biggest bluebottle was

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hovering, buzzing away, over the lavender bushes, when he suddenly caught sight of the little wood-louse on the garden path.

"Lovely morning," buzzed he, "and the lavender's a charming blue to-day, diddle diddle!"

"Blue!" answered the wood-louse, who could not fly, and had always had to look at everything from underneath, "Blue! What nonsense. So much twirling about has turned your head! Blue! Why, the lavender is *green*, of course!"

"Diddle, diddle," answered the bluebottle, "the colour of the grass has got into your eyes. Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle."

"Lavender's green," answered she.

"Just listen to what the wood-louse says," said the bluebottle to the humming bees. "She says the lavender is green."

"Lavender is blue, diddle, diddle!" said they.

"No, green," said the wood-louse, and curled herself into a ball to show that that was the end of the argument as far as she was concerned.

But the bluebottle was not satisfied, so he flew down and buzzed on to the warm path beside her.

"When I am King, diddle diddle, you shall be Queen," said he in his most insinuating voice.

The wood-louse uncurled herself.

"Ah, I thought that would make you see things differently," said he.

"Do you really mean it?" said she.

"Of course, diddle, diddle," said the bluebottle, who was a flighty creature, and had already forgotten what he had said.

Then away he flew over the lavender bushes.

"Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle, isn't it?" said he.

"So you say," said the wood-louse.

After that the wood-louse came out every morning at noon on to the garden path, for she hoped that the bluebottle would have become King of the Garden, and that he would come and claim her as his bride—but he never came. He hummed and buzzed with his friends, and forgot the wood-louse altogether, and the scent of the lavender grew stronger and more poignant every day.

At last the poor little wood-louse could bear it no longer, and she went to see the snail who was a friend of hers.

"What colour do you call the lavender?" said she.

"Why, green, of course," answered the snail.

"So do I," answered the wood-louse; "but when I am Queen of the Garden I shall call it blue."

"Queen of the Garden!" said the snail.

"Why, *you* will never be Queen of the Garden!"

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"Why not?" said the wood-louse. "The bluebottle said that when he was King I should be Queen."

"And that will certainly be—never," said the snail; "for look! here comes the King of the Garden and his Queen with him."

The wood-louse looked, and there, circling and twirling over their heads, were two of the most beautiful butterflies she had ever seen. They fluttered up and down in spirals, in and out and across each other, setting gracefully to partners, their lovely wings glistening in the sunshine.

All the garden creatures rose to meet them, bees and bluebottles and other butterflies circling, humming, buzzing, above and below them. The sun shone as it had never shone before. The scent of the lavender was almost overpowering.

The two butterflies lingered a moment on the lavender flowers and sipped their honeyed sweetness. Then they rose again and came to rest a moment on the path.

"What a beautiful blue the lavender is above," said the King.

"And how fair a green beneath," answered the Queen.

They passed quite close to the wood-louse, but they did not notice her; and then they soared up into the blue sky, flying higher and

ever higher, till they were lost to sight altogether.

The bluebottles, bees, and the other butterflies, returned to the lavender bushes.

The snail crept under a stone and went to sleep.

One bluebottle buzzed louder than the others.

"Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle."

"Lavender's green," muttered the wood-louse as she curled herself up in her lonely, dark little hole. "You will never be a King—and I—I shall never be a Queen!"

Poor little wood-louse; but then, you see, she had always had to look at things from underneath.

II

THE PRINCESS AND THE CUCUMBERS

A project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers.

SWIFT

THERE was once upon a time a little Princess called Amarillya. She was very beautiful, and she was very clever, and she did not like going to bed at all.

It was a rule in the Palace that directly the sun set little Amarillya must go to bed, and the Royal Nurse and the Lord Chamberlain were always by her to see that this rule was obeyed. It was no use for the Princess to pretend that the sun had only gone behind a cloud, and would be coming out again in a minute, because the Lord Chamberlain, who was very learned and very dignified, would know at once if such was not the case, and would only hurry her off to bed faster than ever.

The worst of this rule was, that, of course, if the sun did not get up in the morning, Amarillya could not get up either; and once or twice she spent whole days in bed because the sun was sulky and refused to come out from behind the clouds at all.

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Amarillya did her best to make friends with the sunbeams. When the evenings approached, she encouraged them to play with her until the very last moment. This they loved to do, and would dance and sport upon her golden hair, or play hide-and-seek about her little silver shoes as long as possible.

Sometimes she played with them so long that they would suddenly get quite pink with shame to think how late she was keeping them.

Then the sun would call them, and with long, lingering kisses the sunbeams would say good-night to Amarillya and disappear behind the hill in the west—and then, *at once* Amarillya was marshalled off to bed.

"Why is it that bed-time comes so dreadfully soon?" asked Amarillya plaintively one evening.

The Lord Chamberlain only answered "Umph!" which was his way when he was annoyed.

"Little girls should not ask silly questions," said the Royal Nurse.

"Why can't I catch some sunbeams and keep them with me for ever and ever?" said Amarillya again. "Then I need never go to bed."

"Umph!" said the Lord Chamberlain more decidedly than before.

"What nonsense you do talk, child," said the Royal Nurse.

"I think I'll talk to Giles the Gardener about

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it. It's an 'stremely good idea," said Amarillya, who had almost reached the Night Nursery door by this time.

"Umph! Umph!" said the Lord Chamberlain even louder, as he opened the door for her and then stalked away. He did not like Giles.

"Hurry up into bed and stop chattering," said the Royal Nurse, shutting the door with a bang.

The next afternoon Amarillya, with the sunbeams dancing and playing all about her, ran into the garden to find Giles. She discovered him at work in front of the enormous cucumber frames belonging to the Palace.

"What's all that glass for?" said Amarillya.

"Well, missy, it's like this," said Giles. "That there glass is to catch them pretty little sunbeams as you're so fond of, and put them all inside of the cowcumbers."

"Oh-h," said Amarillya. "And is it the sunbeams that make the cucumbers so fat?"

"Why, in coorse, missy," said Giles.

"Oh-h," said Amarillya again. "Then I'll make the Lord Chamberlain ask papa to let me have a cucumber frame full of cucumbers all for mine own self."

That evening when the sun went down, Amarillya was so anxious to speak to the Lord Chamberlain that she quite forgot to grumble at having to go to bed.

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"Please," she said, "will you ask papa to give me one of the biggest cucumber frames, the one that has the most cucumbers in?"

"Umph!" said the Lord Chamberlain, which may have meant yes, or may have meant no.

"Cucumbers are very bad for little girls," said the Royal Nurse.

But the Lord Chamberlain really did ask the King, and the next day Amarillya, on going into the garden, found that one of the biggest frames had been marked with a big 'A,' to show that it now belonged to her.

The sun was pouring down on the frame, and, as Amarillya supposed, into the cucumbers.

"Giles," she said, "you'll tell me when they're full, won't you?"

"What, missy?" said Giles.

"You'll tell me when the cucumbers are quite ripe, and there's no room for any more sunbeams?"

"Ay, ay, missy," said Giles, grinning from ear to ear.

It was a glorious summer. The sun beat down on the cucumbers every day. Amarillya said that she was sure she could almost *feel* them getting larger. One was so big that it looked like a vegetable marrow!

"You can have that one to-morrow, missy," said Giles.

Amarillya was delighted. She took care to

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put her little silver knife under her pillow, so that she might cut the cucumber open in the middle of the night.

"Then all the sunbeams will come pouring out," thought she, "and they will light up all the room as bright as day. Then I shall call Nursie and tell her I can get up and need never go to bed again; because there are lots and lots of cucumbers, and when these are all emptied of their sunbeams, I will grow more and more and more, so that there will never be any more nights at all!"

The next night the cucumber was put on a plate beside her bed. The blinds were open, and the sky, save for one patch of clouds, was quite clear.

As soon as her Nurse had said good-night and left her, Amarillya took her little silver knife from under her pillow.

"Now for some glorious sunshine!" said she.

It was so dark that she had to feel for the cucumber with her hands. How fat it was! Then with her silver knife she cut it carefully in half, right through the very middle.

Just at that moment a very faint silvery light flooded the room, not at all like sunlight.

"Why, it's only *moonshine*!" said Amarillya.

"Where can the sunbeams have got to?"

Poor Amarillya, she was bitterly disappointed; and when she looked at the cut

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cucumber in the morning, its inside had a dreadfully green and 'moonlighty' look.

So it happened that Amarillya never got the sunbeams out of the cucumbers, though she had seen so many ☺ in. And when the Lord Chamberlain heard all about it the next evening he only said "Umph!" very contemptuously, and hurried her upstairs to bed faster than ever.

AUGUST

- I. THE HARBOUR BUOY
- II. PIRATES

I

THE HARBOUR BUOY

*The little fishes of the sea
They sent a message unto me.*

LEWIS CARROLL

DO you know who I am ?
I am the Harbour Buoy. I am painted red, and day and night I bob up and down at the harbour mouth to show the ships how to go in and out. The Tide and I always turn together, and, try as I will, I can never beat him, and I don't expect you could either.

The Lighthouse despises me. But then we all know what a proud, grand lady she is. Besides, she has not the lapping water round her all day long as I have ; and the sea-gulls would never dare to joke with her ; and as for the *fishes*, well, she practically never sees them at all. I wonder if she guesses how much she misses by that !

Fishes are really great fun, and I am not above a joke with them myself now and then. There are those jolly porpoise fellows who come tumbling over and over into the harbour. What a time they have, to be sure ! Always

playing catch, with a somersault in between the turns! Then there are the lobsters, stupid creatures for the most part. What they find attractive in a lobster pot I never could see! And then the merry little twinkling, shining mackerel! There's a chattering, cheery company! I really think I like the mackerel best of all. Does My Lady Lighthouse ever see *them*, I wonder.

How cold and grand she is; and how she looks down on me. Yet I am never so happy as when I think she is shining on me at night as I bob up and down in the moonlight and try to speak to her. Perhaps she never thinks of me at all. She always seems to be looking so far away, right out on to the horizon, where I, alas, can never go; and yet once——

Dear me, I am growing quite sentimental. How the sea-gulls whir and flash and screech to-day. Why, here come the mackerel. The saucy little fellows! There was a summer holiday once—— Well, I will tell you the whole story right from the beginning.

In the Summer Holidays children come down to the shore. I don't much care for them. They usually call me names, and laugh at me because I am fixed to the bottom and can't sail out in a boat and catch mackerel with them—*me*!

One particular summer a particular family came down. They came right on to the beach. "Hullo, old buoy!" they called. "We're going

mackerel fishing to-morrow. We are going to have such a lot for supper, and mother isn't going to order anything else. Oh, won't it be fun! Won't it be fun!"

They *were* excited. So were the mackerel.

That night the mackerel moved a good long way off and sent me a message.

There was moonlight that night, I remember. There were clouds, too, scudding across the sky, and when the mackerel sent their message the waves wriggled across with it, and spat it out over my head—rude fellows waves, but I'm above quarrelling with them. My Lady Lighthouse was gazing and flashing out to sea as usual, just as she does now, only perhaps she was rather more twinkly then.

"Will the Lighthouse look down and notice me if I do what the mackerel wish?" I asked the waves, and they splashed back to the Lighthouse to find out. I don't think she ever answered.

Anyway I sent a message back to the mackerel that I would do what I could. All the impudent little waves dimpled and twinkled in the sunlight next morning, because, of course, by that time they all knew about it.

Down came the family to the beach.

What a scrambling and shouting as they all got into the boat.

"Let *me* have the oars!"

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"No, *me*!"

"Oh, I want to steer!"

"You can help with the sails!"

"Have you put the spinner on the line?"

"Oh, do look at the sails! *Isn't* she pretty!"

"Get the lines out quick! I am sure there will be mackerel just by the buoy! Quick!"

They put the line out, and were just sailing past me, when one of the children shouted:

"Oh, I've got one! I've got a fish! Such a big one! Feel it! Feel it! What a good thing mother didn't order any supper. Look! Look!"

They all jumped up in the boat except the old boatman; but he's a friend of mine and I expect the waves had told him our secret. Then they started to pull in the line.

They pulled and pulled.

"We must almost have got a shark!" said the biggest boy.

"P'r'aps it's a whale!" said the smallest one.

Still they went on pulling, and no wonder!

For they had not caught a shark, nor yet a whale, nor yet a mackerel either—because, and I bob even now when I think of it—because they had caught *me, me*, who am held fast to the bottom and whom they might pull for ever and ever and never move away.

How I bobbed and hopped with laughter!
How the waves rippled and gurgled round me!
How even the sea-gulls shrieked, and the little

white clouds in the blue sky chased each other over our heads in glee. As for the mackerel, they were a long way off, but the waves twinkled over to tell them and they just hopped out of the water with joy.

Still the children went on pulling.

At last the biggest boy fell backward into the boat with a jerk, bringing the line with him.

"Why, there is nothing there!" said he.

"Not even a teeny s'rimp," said the little one.

"And look, the spinner's gone!" cried another.

"And we can't fish any more!" said the fourth.

"And mother's never ordered us any supper!" said the eldest boy.

"Aye, aye," said the old boatman, with a wink at me. "Ye'll have coort the old buoy yonder!"

I wonder whether they ever did have anything for supper. They certainly went home without a fish, and they couldn't very well eat *me*!

But that night was the happiest in all my life; because My Lady Lighthouse—yes, I'll swear to it to my very last day—she *winked* at me!

Winked

II

PIRATES

The sea with sunken wrack and sunless treasures.

SHAKESPEARE

JACK shut his book with a sigh.
“What a glorious time the pirates had!”
said he. “What a pity they don’t live
nowadays, or that I didn’t live then! Why,
pirates and magic! Well, life was worth living
in those days.”

He turned lazily on one side and started to
throw pebbles at the big line of wire-cased
cable, that starting from the little house above
him, went running down the cliff and along the
sand and so into the sea, only to come out of
it again far away in America.

“If you come to think of it,” said Jack again,
“the cable is rather magic. Fancy going all these
miles under the sea! And what a lot of things
one could see on the way if only one was small
enough to slide along it and peep through the
chinks. Ghosts of pirates, perhaps—or wrecks
—or treasures!”

As Jack said these words he settled himself
more comfortably on the sand. The sun beat

full down on him. The sunbeams danced about his curly head ; one danced into his right-hand pocket and lay there like a golden guinea among the shells, seaweed, and other treasures. . . .

The next thing of which Jack was conscious was of a confused humming and buzzing all mixed up with clicks and taps, "Like the lady who taps telegrams at the post office," as he said afterward. Gradually the humming and buzzing assorted itself into words : "Sailing on the *Ottawa* Thursday week." "Seven and a half per cent." "Delivered on Friday." "Very ill, come"; and then the words and tapping seemed to die away, and Jack could hear nothing but a humming, rhythmical whir. He opened his eyes and looked about him.

He was in a long dark passage stretching dimly as far as he could see, both behind and in front of him.

The passage was lit by a very faint light which seemed somehow to come from his own pocket ; though he knew, and felt again to make sure, that he had not his electric torch with him.

The passage was perfectly round and very narrow. It was really quite solid, but Jack seemed in some extraordinary way to have become part of it. Soft waves of wind seemed hurrying past him backward and forward. He kept on feeling little sparks like pins and needles all down his back. He was half walking, half

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sliding along. The waves behind him pushed him forward and up and down as if he was on a switchback.

He was travelling at an almost incredible speed. In the hazy grey light he could see that the walls of the passage looked hard and smooth. Above the humming whir immediately around him he could hear a booming roar which reminded him of the noise that the sea made dashing on the rocks.

He himself felt very thin and shadowy. Up and down he floated, as the waves hurried him along the passage.

He soon began to get tired of the perpetual motion. He put his hand out against the wall to stop himself. The little light from his pocket showed him a thick piece of wire projecting from the wall. He caught hold of it with both hands. The waves whirled and hummed on, up and down, up and down, forward and onward. He stood still, holding firmly on to the piece of wire. Just beside it there seemed a tiny chink in the wall. He stooped down and found he could squeeze himself through it, but he was so thin and light that he felt as if he was just oozing through like water.

On the other side he found himself in a still narrower and even darker passage.

There were no waves at all here. He walked along, guided by the light from his pocket.

Then he saw another crack, on the side farthest down from the first passage.

Through the crack filtered a silvery-grey twilight. There was no sound here of any kind, except from far off a very faint splashing.

He 'oozed' through the second crack and then stood still, gazing about him in absolute astonishment.

He was in a vast grey country the like of which he had never seen before. Under his feet was a carpet of soft sand, and all about him there grew huge trees of queer shapes and forms. The general light was very dim and grey, almost cold; but where the little ray from his pocket lit up the trees they took on all sorts of wonderful colours; purple, pink, bright green and brown, and their branches were all waving, though Jack could not feel any wind at all. He stooped down to look at the ground. The light from his pocket gleamed on numbers of beautiful shells and stones.

Suddenly the air all round him seemed disturbed; he looked up, and a great form like an airship came looming toward him.

As it came nearer Jack saw that it was a huge fish.

Jack did not dare to shout too loud, everything seemed so quiet, but he clapped his hands.

"Good! Good!" he said. "I am at the bottom of the sea at last. What's that bell ringing?"

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He walked toward the sound. Except in his own pathway, which was lit by the light from his pocket, all was dim and grey.

As he drew nearer to the sound of the bell he heard rough voices shouting.

"Ay, but you're a thief and a liar!"

"And after all these years down below ye might 'ave kept a civil tongue in yer 'ead, Dick Martin."

"And there's for you!" This was followed by the sound of a sharp blow and a heavy thud.

"Twelve to one on a red card!" shouted another voice.

"Ay, fill up the glasses and drink all!"

"Here's to the skull and cross-bones!"

"Pirates!" whispered Jack and drew nearer. The sound of the tolling bell grew louder as he approached.

At first in the uniform greyness he could distinguish nothing. He was standing behind a big rock, and the pocket from which the light came was quite hidden.

He peered round the rock. About twenty yards away a number of ruffianly-looking men were sitting or standing on several upturned casks, spars of wood, overturned chests, and the like.

The whole scene was so grey, and drab-looking, that Jack began to feel almost disappointed. The men had evil faces—dirty too, and one had

a direful squint. Their clothes were colourless, torn, dirty and ragged. Several of them carried ugly-looking knives in their belts. One of the chests had fallen open and a number of coins lay on the ground. One of the men kicked at them with his torn boot.

Jack's heart sank within him. He had expected something so infinitely glorious, somehow,—red silk sashes, shining dirks, and golden goblets. Even the wrecked ship behind them was a torn and wretched affair. She lay beam upward, and farther in the distance Jack could see the broken funnels of a much more modern ship.

The bell tolled louder.

"It is like the sound of the bell-buoy out at sea where the wreck was," thought Jack.

He shifted his position slightly, and the light from his pocket found a crack in the rock and fell full on the group of pirates.

The scene was transformed as though by magic.

In a moment ugly words and quarrelling voices were changed into the tones of imperious command dear to all boyish romance, and the whole place rang with uproarious, joyous laughter. Truly they had not such bad faces after all! How tall and gallant were some of them! Two or three were dark, with gold rings in their ears. All were dressed in bright

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colours. Yes, one had actually a crimson silk sash! Their daggers shone bright with jewels; their linen was spotless. The money pouring from the chests was shining golden guineas. The goblets that they clinked together were pure gold. The half-open chests revealed rich silks and satins and stones of priceless value. The wrecked ship behind was alight in all her port-holes. Her silver sails seemed bellying out in a stiff breeze.

How the pirates laughed and joked together.

"You remember that affair of the *Saucy Kate*," laughed one.

"Ay, a fine treasure of gold we got out of her," said another.

"Sing us the song you made on it, Dick Martin!" shouted a third. "Ay, sing, lad, sing!"

They all stood up. The man with the crimson sash jumped on an empty cask and, brandishing his goblet in his hand, began to sing:

Oh, a Pirate's life is the life for us!
We'll fight with a knife or a blunderbuss.

(All) Yoho! Yoho! Yoho!

We went aboard the *Saucy Kate*,
And we plundered her cargo of pieces of eight

(All) Yoho! Yoho! Yoho!

We hung her captain a masthead high,
We drank his health till the casks ran dry.

(All) Yoho! Yoho! Yoho!

Then we sailed away by the light of the moon.

We will plunder another good ship soon!

(All) Yoho! Yoho! Yoho!

Then cheers for our captain, One! Two Three!

And cheers for his crew—that's you and me!

Yoho! Yoh-o-o-o!

At the close of the song there was a tremendous outburst of cheering, and a brandishing of knives and goodies. They tossed the gold pieces from one to the other.

Jack was the first with excitement. He jumped from behind the rock.

"Take me a good look," shouted he, running forward and then throwing his head thrown backward, shoulders, feet wide apart, to show that he was not afraid.

As he put his hands in his pockets the light faded from the whole scene—crimson sash, gold earrings, jewelled daggers, pieces of light, dazzling gems were gone, vanished into thin, dull shadows. A faint glimmer showed where the pieces of light had been lying. A few scraps and shreds was all that was left of the silks. The men had somehow shrunk and grown smaller, commoner, dirtier, just as he had seen them at first.

The cheering and laughter died away: "You dirty fool, get up," grumbled one of the men, kicking another, who had fallen prone on the ground beside a cask.

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Jack did not wait to hear any more. Taking his hands out of his pockets, he ran swiftly away as fast as he could.

His one idea was to get back to the passage. He does not, even now, know how he did get there—but there he was, floating up and down on the humming waves, and the pins and needles tingling up and down his back as before. Then the tapping and the incoherent words began again. "Good news." "Yes, order six hundred and seventy-three." "Certainly, have tin-lined," and then, splash !

Jack woke up with a start, to find a big wave dashing over his feet. His book was lying open at the picture of the pirate with the red sash. The sun was still beating down on his curly head, and one little sunbeam danced out of his pocket to join the others. A few feet away the Atlantic cable slid down into the sea on its long journey.

All looked just as it had done before Jack went on his wonderful adventure.

"I wonder," said he, as he picked up his book and climbed the cliff path home, "I really do wonder, which were the real pirates and which were the ghosts. Yoho ! Yoho ! Yoho !

SEPTEMBER

- I. THE GIANT'S WIG**
- II. THE FLUTE-PLAYER**

I

THE GIANT'S WIG

*There was a little man and he had a little gun,
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He shot Johnny Sprig through the middle of his wig,
And knocked it off his head, head, head.*

OLD RHYME

THERE was once upon a time a giant called Johnny Sprig. He was as tall as a house, yet when he went to bed at night, he slept on a bed no bigger than yours or mine.

How did he manage it ?

Well, he was no ordinary giant. To begin with, he had the most extraordinary hair. It was bright copper colour and turned up in a little frill all round the ends. He was so tall that no human person had ever seen this hair quite close, but the squirrel (who told me this story) said that it was not really his own hair at all, but an enormous wig.

The queer thing about this wig (for the squirrel had peeped through the giant's bedroom window and seen it with his own eyes) was that when Johnny Sprig came home and took it off for the night, not only was he as bald as an

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egg, but he shrivelled into a little person no bigger than you or me.

Moreover, the squirrel had overheard the giant whispering to himself that if ever this wonderful wig should come off in the day-time the giant would shrivel into an ordinary little person for ever.

Of course nobody knew this except the squirrel, and every day the giant strode from end to end of the country striking terror to all beholders.

The farmers round about hated him because his big feet trampled on their crops; but they none of them guessed that they had only to take his wig away and he would become as small and insignificant as themselves.

There were three brothers who lived in a farm on the edge of the wood where was the giant's house. They had never dared to venture into the wood, for they thought that if they came upon the giant, he would eat them up immediately. To protect themselves, they never went outside their house without their guns.

The names of the three brothers were Big Man, Middle Man, and Little Man.

Big Man carried a Big Gun.

Middle Man carried a Middling-sized Gun.

Little Man carried a very Little Gun—and their bullets were all made of lead.

"There goes Johnny Sprig!" said Big Man to his brothers one evening. "What a huge shadow he has! Why, the house grows quite dark when he passes by. If I were to follow him into the wood now, and shoot him with my Big Gun—why, I should earn the gratitude of all the country-side!"

"Well, why don't you do it, then?" laughed Middle Man.

"He would probably eat me up before I had even a chance to shoot."

"All the more left for me and Little Man!"

"Still, I am a Big Man, and I have a Big Gun. I will start to-morrow."

The next evening, at sunset, as Johnny Sprig went home, his huge shadow fell upon the house. Big Man took his Big Gun and his bullets of lead, and followed Johnny Sprig cautiously into the wood.

Johnny Sprig chose a green, mossy path, and the heads of the tall trees on each side of him just brushed against his wonderful hair as he went along. A little squirrel was chattering among the trees, but Johnny Sprig paid no heed to it.

Big Man came creeping along behind, with his Big Gun all ready to shoot.

The Giant stopped to look at the sunset. Big Man was just going to load and fire his gun when the squirrel above him began to chatter

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louder than ever, and I threw down an acorn cup which hit Big Man on the nose.

"Shoot high!" shrieked the Squirrel. "Shoot high!"

Big Man loaded his gun, aimed as high as he could, and the bullet whizzed between the giant's finger and thumb.

"What's that whistling through my fingers!" roared Johnny Sprig, turning round.

Big Man did not wait for the giant to see him. When Johnny Sprig turned he dropped his Big Gun and all his bullets of lead, and ran away home, just as fast as ever his legs would carry him.

Loud and long laughed Middle Man. "So that is the way you kill the giant, is it? You look frightened out of your wits. You who are a Big Man too! Coward, I call you!"

"Then g-go and kill the giant y-yourself!" gasped Big Man, still shaking with fright.

"Very well, I will," said Middle Man.

The next evening when Johnny Sprig's huge shadow fell upon the house, Big Man ran and hid himself in the coal cellar, but Middle Man took his Middling-sized Gun and his bullets of lead, and followed the giant into the forest.

Johnny Sprig chose a green, mossy path, and the heads of the tall trees on each side of him just brushed against his wonderful hair as he went along. A little squirrel was chattering

among the trees, but Johnny Sprig paid no heed to it.

As before, the Giant stopped to look at the sunset. Middle Man was about to load his gun when the squirrel above him began chattering louder than ever, and threw down two acorns, one after the other, both of which hit Middle Man on the nose.

"Shoot high!" shouted the squirrel. "Shoot high!"

Middle Man loaded his gun and fired. He was not as tall as Big Man and his bullet only whizzed between the Giant's legs.

"What's that whistling through my legs?" roared Johnny Sprig, turning round.

Middle Man did not wait for the Giant to see him; as Johnny Sprig turned, he dropped his Middling-sized Gun and his bullets of lead and fled home as fast as ever his legs would carry him.

Loud and long laughed Big Man. "So that is the way you kill the Giant?" said he. "Why, if *I* could not kill him with my Big Gun, how ever did *you* expect to kill him with only a Middling-sized Gun? Why, Little Man will be saying he wants to go and kill the Giant next!"

"I am going to-morrow evening," said Little Man quietly.

At these words even Middle Man forgot his

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recent fright, and he and Big Man laughed until their sides ached.

"Ho! ho! ho! Fancy Little Man trying!"

"He! he! he! How does he expect to succeed where you and I have failed!"

Little Man said nothing, and cleaned up his Little Gun until it shone again.

The next evening when Johnny Sprig's huge shadow fell upon the house, Big Man and Middle Man both hid themselves in the coal cellar; but Little Man took his Little Gun and followed the Giant into the forest.

Johnny Sprig chose a green, mossy path, and the heads of the tall trees on each side of him just brushed his wonderful hair as he went along. A little squirrel was chattering among the trees, but Johnny Sprig paid no heed to it.

As before, the Giant stopped to look at the setting sun. Little Man was about to load his gun when the squirrel above him began to chatter louder than ever, and threw down three acorn cups, which hit Little Man on the nose one after the other.

"Shoot high!" shouted the squirrel. "Shoot high!"

Now Little Man was very little, and his gun was very little too. He looked up and saw the squirrel sitting on the very topmost branch above him, just preparing to throw down another acorn cup.

The Giant was still staring at the sunset.

"All right!" said Little Man to himself.

"All right, Mr Squirrel, I will shoot high. And I will shoot from a high place too!"

Quick as thought he climbed the squirrel's tree, taking his Little Gun with him. He climbed till he was just on a level with the back of the giant's head.

Then he took a careful aim.

Bang!

Off flopped the giant's wig on to the path in front of him.

"Why, wherever is the Giant?" said Little Man scrambling down the tree even faster than he had climbed up it.

When he reached the ground he found himself face to face with another little man no bigger than himself; and the strange little man's head was as bald as an egg!

"Dear me!" said Little Man in astonishment.

"Who are you?"

"I am Johnny Sprig," said the other. "Can you lend me a handkerchief? My head is *so* cold."

Little Man was so utterly astonished that he could only take his handkerchief out of his pocket in silence and hand it over to the other little man to tie round his bald head.

"Dear me!" said Little Man again at last.

"I think you had better come home and have supper with me and my brothers."

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"Certainly," said Johnny Sprig. "It was poor fun being a giant; one had no friends of one's own size—but now——" And a very jolly supper they all had together I assure you.

As for the Giant's wig—the squirrel showed me the remains of it the other day. It looked to me like nothing so much as a bundle of dead and shrivelled leaves.

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II

THE FLUTE PLAYER

The flower of old Japan.

ALFRED NOYES

IT was full September.

On the old lacquered cabinet stood a bowl of the finest porcelain china covered with quaint Japanese figures and devices, and in the bowl bloomed three perfect chrysanthemums—the flower of old Japan.

The bowl was even older than the lacquered cabinet, and it was full of stories, quaint and perfumed, and at night, had you listened, you would have heard the ancient bowl whispering the old legends to the three chrysanthemums, who slowly unfolded their inmost petals with delight. The story that they loved best of all was the last. It was the story of Prince Yasumasu.

In old Japan there once lived a young Prince, as unselfish and good as he was beautiful. In all Japan none could play the flute more wonderfully than he. So entrancing and sweet was his music that it was said that even the moon herself stood still in the sky to listen to him.

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At the time of this story a great calamity had befallen the country. For days and nights during many, many weeks it had rained without ceasing, and Yasumasu saw with despair that the harvests in all the country-side were ruined, and that before long his people would be starving and crying to him for food. Tales of distress reached him from far and wide, and Yasumasu became sad and melancholy, for he could think of no scheme to help his poor and suffering people.

One day he took his beloved flute and went out alone on to the seashore. He wandered along for some miles, playing sad, soft music, until he came to a rude bamboo hut where lived an Ancient and Wise Man.

The Wise Man was sitting at the door of his hut, and as Yasumasu approached he called to him in a low voice :

“What seek you, sad Prince?”

“Alas,” answered Yasumasu, “the harvest has failed and my people are starving. Tell me, I beg of you, how I may relieve their distress.”

“Weep not, O Yasumasu!” said the Ancient Man, “for to you it shall be granted to bring comfort to your suffering people. Look out across the sea. The country that you behold shining yonder in the light of the sun is ruled over by a powerful and wicked Genie. He has taught his people to take the clay of the earth

and to fashion it into the most beautiful pots, so wonderfully delicate that one would think they were made of the finest egg-shells, and, moreover, they have upon them flowers and birds and streams so cunningly devised that verily one would believe that the very world was alive on them in miniature. The secret of the making of these pots is most carefully guarded, and the Genie does not permit any of his subjects to tell it on pain of death. His palace also is kept under a strict watch, so that no stranger shall creep in and steal the secret unawares. Many have entered yonder country, but no one has ever returned from it alive. But if you, O Yasumasu, were to travel thither and learn the secret, you could teach it to your people. Then, they too might make these wondrous pots, and sell them to all the world in exchange for the food of which they stand in such great need.

"Verily, I will raise an army and conquer the Genie," said Yasumasu proudly.

"Nay, Prince," answered the Wise Man. "The Genie is as wicked as he is powerful, and would soon cause both you and your army to perish. The only way to obtain the secret is for you to sail across alone and unattended save by your wondrous flute."

"A sailing ship is even now at anchor in the bay," said Yasumasu. "To save my people I

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will go at once alone into the land of this terrible Genie."

By this time it was night, and the moon shone round and clear as Yasumasu set sail in his little boat. His own pine-fringed shores were soon left far behind, a gentle breeze wafted him ever onward, the little waves lapped against the sides of the boat, and Yasumasu played a sweet and hopeful melody upon his flute, and thus by daybreak he found himself on the shore of the land of the Genie.

He anchored his boat, and wended his way through a little village, across the country-side, and straight on till he came to a large town. The whole country seemed rich and prosperous, and everywhere he went the people were busy with their pot-making. In the town were wealthy merchants dressed in gay, embroidered silks—but all seemed too busy to speak to, or even to notice, the new-comer. So he took up his position in the very centre of the busiest street and began to play his flute.

No playing such as his had ever been heard in all that town before, and a crowd soon gathered about him.

Rich and poor alike were enchanted with his magic music. The great merchants left their work to listen to the flute-player, and so entranced were they that they begged Yasumasu to come home and dine with them.

Yasumasu was delighted with his success. "Now indeed," thought he, "it will be easy to discover the secret of the porcelain-making."

But though the merchants were willing enough to show him the wondrous bowls, which were even more beautiful than the Wise Man had said, yet, when Yasumasu inquired as to how these bowls were made, the merchants at once changed the subject, and bade him play to them upon his flute.

Yasumasu could not but comply, but, ever as he played, he was wondering how he could find out the secret.

"Play on! Play on!" said the merchants. "We could listen to you for ever."

They invited yet others to come and hear the wonderful flute-player. Great noblemen, beautiful ladies, wise counsellors, and young princes all crowded to listen to the magic music, but of the secret of the porcelain-making they told him never a word.

Yasumasu's fame as a flute-player became so great that at last it reached the ears of no less a person than the Evil Genie himself, the King of all that land.

"Bid the stranger to our palace," said he. "We would hear for ourselves this music of which every one is speaking."

Yasumasu was overjoyed. "Doubtless," thought he, "I shall see the pots being made

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as I pass through this palace which no stranger has ever yet been allowed to enter. I will store in my heart all the processes that I see on my way, and thus shall I learn the secret and take it back to my suffering people."

Taking his beloved flute in his hand, he went straight to the palace. He was escorted through vast rooms and corridors, in all of which the porcelain bowls were being made and decorated, but alas! he was forced to go so quickly that, even had he seen everything, he could never have remembered enough to teach his people.

"It only remains for me to win the heart of the Genie with my flute," said he, "and to prevail on him to tell me the secret himself."

He was soon ushered into the presence of the Genie.

The Genie was hideously ugly, and dressed in a gorgeous silken robe embroidered with golden dragons; beside him was his wife, and around him stood a group of his principal nobles.

"Play," commanded the Genie in a harsh and grating voice.

Yasumasu took his little reed flute and began to play.

He first played the sorrows of his people, and then, slowly and sweetly, a song of hope and love, thinking with his music to win the heart of the Evil Genie.

But alas for Yasumasu, the Evil Genie had no heart! His wife and all his nobles were melted to tears by the young Prince's eloquent music, but the Genie sat upon his throne as immovable as a rock.

"Call *that* a flute!" he cried at last. "Why, 'tis only a piece of reed with a few holes in it."

"Call *that* music! Why, even the frogs in the pond make a more pleasing noise."

"I find nothing marvellous in the playing or in the player. Let him be conducted back to the village where he landed and shipped home again. He may consider himself fortunate that he finds his way alive out of this kingdom at all!"

So, with a curt wave of his hand, the Evil Genie dismissed Yasumasu, who was hurried out of the palace and away through the town, back to the village where he had first landed, and where his little boat still rode at anchor by the shore.

Yasumasu went sadly down to the beach, and despair was in his heart. He had failed, and failed miserably. Of what use was his life if his people were starving and in sorrow?

A few of the simple village folk gathered round him; the pots that they were making were still in their hands. They stared at him curiously, for they had heard that he had played before their King.

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One, bolder than the rest, came forward and lightly touched the flute.

"Kind sir," said he humbly, "play us a few notes on this before you go. Even in this poor village your fame has reached us, and it is but rarely that we hear notes of music."

So Yasumasu once more took his flute, and looking sadly across the sea to his own dear country, he began to play.

Never had he played so well, so sweetly or, alas! so sadly. The flute sang on and on, and in the music was all the sorrow of his country and all the bitter yearning of his despair.

When the last wailing notes faded away, there was a dead hush, and one of the peasant women came slowly forward.

"You are sad," she said. "Tell us all your sorrow. Let us help you if we can."

And a man said :

"I could listen to your music all my life. Tell us what troubles you. I will follow you to the end of the world."

Then Yasumasu told them of all his country's sorrow, and how he had come to their land to find out the Genie's secret, and to take it home to his own people.

"You, too," he added, "make the wondrous pots ; they are even now in your hands. Come back with me, I pray you, and teach my people, and save them from their misery and distress."

He stepped into the boat, and laying his flute to his lips, began to play his magic music, calling, begging, beseeching his hearers to come with him.

One by one, a little group detached themselves from the villagers and stepped into the boat beside him.

They weighed anchor, and, changing his notes into a joyous melody, Yasumasu set sail for home.

But they had no sooner reached the shores of his own land than a terrific storm broke over the sea, and on the cliffs whence they had come they could see the hideous figure of the Genie towering above the highest rock, and through the shrieking of the wind they heard his terrible voice:

"Yasumasu! Yasumasu! You have tricked me with your magic music, and have stolen away my secret! The men whom you have taken with you shall indeed teach your people the secret of the porcelain-making—but you, O vagabond flute-player that you are, you shall wander restless and homeless among the hills, playing your eternal flute for ever and ever!"

Then, with a clap of thunder, the Genie disappeared.

Thus it was that the peasants came to Japan and taught the people the Genie's secret, and the people grew rich and prospered. But

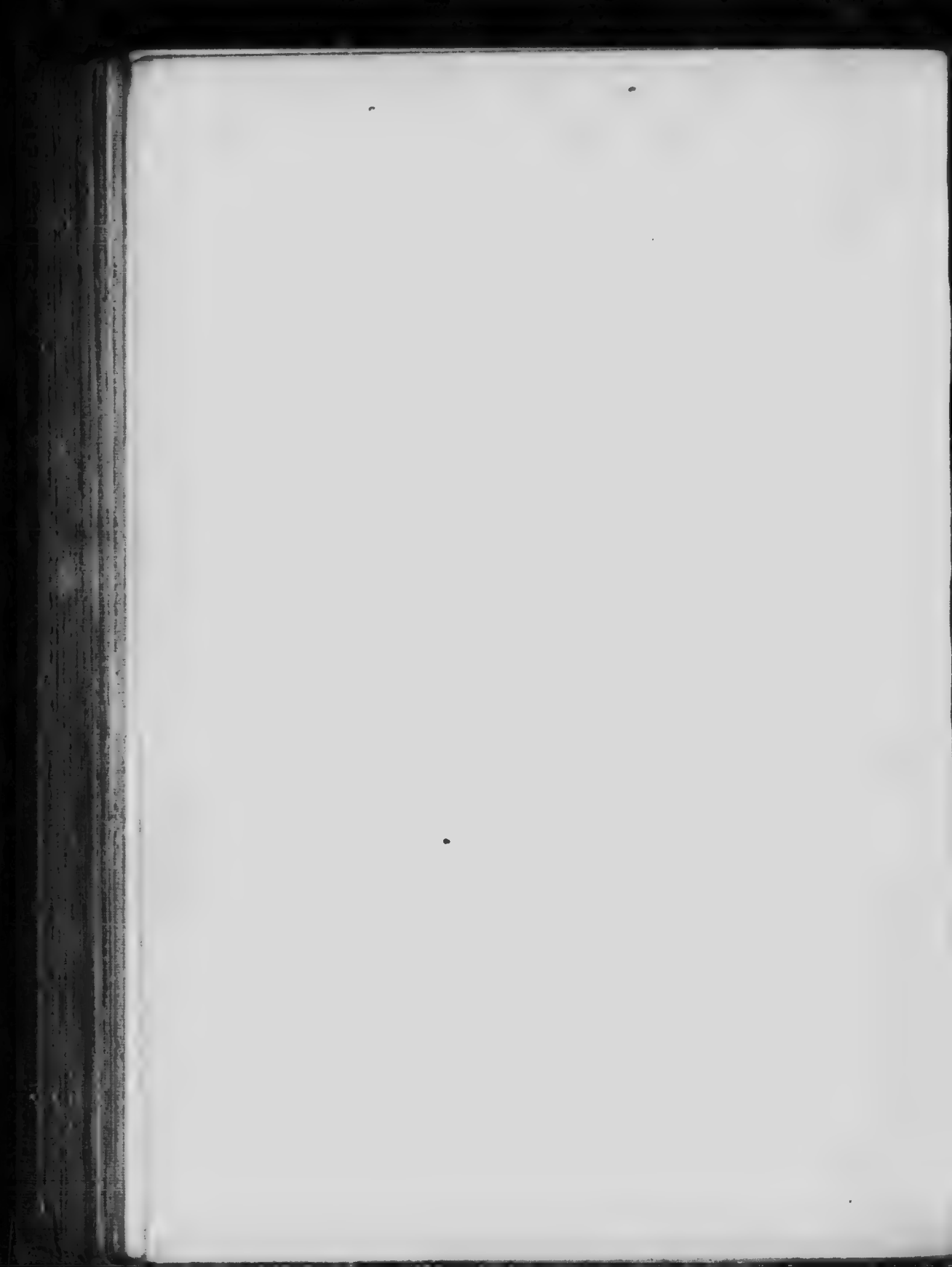
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Yasumasu, from that very day, was compelled to wander aimlessly among the mountains playing on his wondrous flute. Loved and honoured by many he still is, and seen and heard even yet by one or two.

Had you peeped at the old porcelain bowl the next morning, you would have found it full of the petals of the three chrysanthemums, and these petals they had shed in sorrow over the sad story of Yasumasu the flute-player.

OCTOBER

- I. THE BOWL OF MIST
- II. THE HAZEL NUT
- III. THE TWILIGHT FAIRY



I

THE BOWL OF MIST

*A hill full,
A hole full,
Yet you cannot catch a bowl full.*

OLD RIDDLE

THERE was once a very beautiful Princess. She had flashing eyes and long black hair.

Her father was said to be the richest king in the world, and, as she was his only child, all his riches would one day belong to her.

She lived in a beautiful castle set among the hills, and from the castle windows could be seen the rounded hill-tops with the valleys between, for miles and miles on every side.

The Princess loved the hills and valleys, and was never so happy as when she was roving about them all by herself.

Up to her eighteenth year, though she was so rich and beautiful, she had led a simple life enough. But her father thought that it would soon be time for her to marry. He knew well that there were many princes, some even quite young and good-looking, who would be only

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too ready to marry so beautiful and so rich a Princess.

On her eighteenth birthday the King sent for her.

"My daughter," said he, "you have now reached years of discretion. It is time that you gave up wandering about the hills and valleys like any peasant girl—in fact I was about to say that it is really high time you began to think about being married."

"Oh dear, no! I don't want to be married at all!" said the Princess, with a toss of her head.

"But, my dear child," said the King, "I have already received three letters this morning from three different princes—one from the Prince of Braganza, one from the Prince of Mottifel, and one from the Prince of Euphalia—each asking for your hand in marriage."

"The Prince of Braganza is an old fool, and the Prince of Mottifel a young one. I have never heard of the Prince of Euphalia, but I am quite certain, from the mere sound of his name, that I should detest him. I marry one of them! Certainly *not*!" said the Princess, and she stamped her little foot on the floor.

"It is certainly high time that you were married and learnt to control your temper," said the King.

"Well, they only want to marry me because I

am rich and beautiful," said the Princess, tossing back her head again.

"And very excellent reasons too, my dear," answered the King. "It will be extremely awkward for me to refuse them, and may even lead to three declarations of war. You seem to forget, my child, that you are a princess; and that therefore your actions are of more than usual consequence. Yet," added the King, with a sigh, "though I may refuse the princes, you know that I can refuse *you* nothing. So if you won't marry them I suppose you won't; but marry *somebody* you must and shall."

The Princess answered nothing, but looked out of the window.

Spread wide before her were her favourite hills. They were half clouded with a clinging mist that made them look almost like mountains. The valleys, too, were full of mist; you could imagine them hollowed out to the centre of the earth.

"Very well," said she slowly at last. "If you want me to be married, married I will be; but I will only marry the man who brings me a bowl full of mist!"

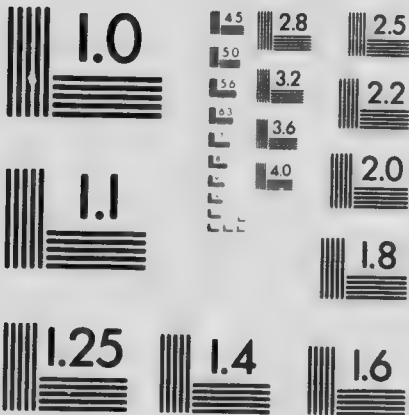
"A bowl full of mist!" gasped the King. "Is the child mad? What is the use of a bowl full of mist?"

"Through mist," answered the Princess dreamily, "everything looks far more soft and



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wonderful than when the air is clear. Hills seem mountains, and valleys deep holes, and when the sun shines through the clouds of mist one can almost imagine oneself to be in heaven. I would have a bowl full of mist always with me, so that through its softening beauty I might look at the whole world."

"The child is certainly mad," said the King again "and the sooner she is married the better! Ah! here comes the Lord Chamberlain! What shall I tell him to announce as the result of our interview?"

"That I will marry him who shall bring me a bowl full of mist," said she, "and that if any one shall dare to ask for my hand in marriage without such a bowl he shall have his head cut off!"

And with a flash of her dark eyes, and a toss of her dark hair, she ran swiftly from the room.

"You hear what she says," said the King to the Lord Chamberlain. "She is quite mad, of course, but a reputation for strangeness does no one any harm in these days. Cause her words to be issued in the form of a public proclamation this afternoon. I will answer the letters of the three princes with my own hand, and will enclose a copy of the proclamation with each reply."

The Lord Chamberlain bowed and left the room.

The King went to his writing-desk and set to

work to answer the letters of the three princes, a task which he found extremely difficult.

After having written and rewritten the letters a dozen times, spoilt twenty new nibs, and bitten thirty penholders in half, he finally sent to all three princes the following :—

“DEAR COUSIN [all kings and princes are cousins],—We thank you for your kind letter, received this morning, and for the offer contained therein. Our daughter is disposed to accept the hand of any suitor who shall bring her a bowl full of mist. We feel sure that you will be only too happy to indulge her in this charming whim, and that we shall soon have the honour and happiness of embracing you as our future son-in-law. Given this third day of October under our hand and seal.”

Later that afternoon, three couriers, each carrying a letter, and a proclamation announcing the penalty of death to any suitor who should present himself without a bowl full of mist, were dispatched, one to each of the three princes.

Early the following week the suitors arrived, each bringing a bowl.

The old Prince of Braganza came first, and before him walked a long-haired page, carrying a golden bowl upon a crimson velvet cushion.

The Prince was old and wrinkled, and extremely ugly, with one leg shorter than the

other. He was received in state in the throne-room, by the Princess and her father. He hobbled up the long room, the page in front of him.

At the foot of the throne he paused, while the page placed the golden bowl at the Princess's feet.

The Prince went shakily down on one knee. Then he winked one of his wicked old eyes at the Princess and said :

"Fair Princess, you ask for a bowl of mist. Here I have brought you a bowl full of the misty cobwebs that hang about my castle. When you come to reign there as Queen they will vanish. Your beauty and your wealth will make all things bright and clear for me, as they were when I myself was young."

The Princess stared scornfully at the golden bowl at her feet. Then she kicked it over angrily; the cobwebs floated away across the floor.

"I will never reign in your castle, you silly old man!" said she. "I ask for a bowl full of the beautiful living mist from the hills yonder, and all you bring me is a bowl full of dead cobwebs. Go back to your musty old castle. Death is the only Queen who is fit to reign with you there."

She clapped her hands. Four soldiers entered the hall and led the old Prince away.

He was too staggered and surprised to speak, but he motioned to his page to pick up the golden bowl and follow him. The Princess never saw him again.

The Prince of Mottifel was next announced. He was young, and dressed in the height of fashion, with an enormous feather in his hat. But he had very little backbone, and no chin to speak of.

Behind him walked a negro carrying a bowl studded with diamonds, in which reposed a delicate gauzy silk veil of priceless value.

The Prince swaggered up the long room, humming a tune, and twirling a ribboned cane in his hand. When he reached the throne he pirouetted three times on one toe, and then, with an exaggerated bow, took off his hat and swept the floor with its curling plume.

"Beautiful Princess," said he, "you have asked for a bowl full of mist. I have brought you a bowl containing a filmy bridal veil of priceless value. In fact I have spent every penny I have in the world upon it. But what need have I for private pence, when you, with all your wealth and beauty, shall share my throne?"

He pirouetted once again, and the negro placed the diamond-studded bowl with the priceless bridal veil at the Princess's feet. She kicked it over angrily. Her breath came so

fiercely from between her lips that the priceless bridal veil was blown in a twinkling out of the nearest open window.

"Never will I be your bride," said she. "I asked for a bowl full of mist from the beautiful hills yonder, and you have foolishly spent all your money on a bridal veil. Go back to your ruined castle, and gamble with Death to get your money back again."

She clapped her hands. Four soldiers appeared to lead the Prince away. He said nothing, but his mouth fell wide open with astonishment, and all the curl seemed to go out of the feather in his hat. With his ribboned cane he motioned to the negro to pick up the diamond-studded bowl and follow him. The Princess never saw him again.

The next day the Prince of Euphalia's arrival was announced at the palace. He had no page or negro, but in his own hands he carried an empty wooden bowl.

He walked straight up the long throne-room, bowl in hand. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, but only at the Princess's dark hair and beautiful face.

As he passed along, the golden sun came out of the mists on the hills, shone through the palace windows on to his sunny, curly head, and lit up his honest blue eyes. He was simply and plainly dressed. He knelt before the Princess.

"Lady," he said, "I have as yet only brought what looks to you an empty bowl. What you require to fill it is difficult to obtain, but at the close of a year and a day from now I will bring you back a bowl full of the mist from yonder hills, or perish in the attempt. I came but to see you once before I started. I may never see you again. My bowl is all I bring, but it is as full of love for you as I hope it will one day be full of the mist you desire so much." He bent forward, took her hand, and kissed it. Then, without another word, he stepped bravely from the room with his wooden bowl under his arm.

For the first time in her life the Princess had nothing to say.

She was so surprised at the Prince's words that she had quite forgotten to clap her hands, and the Prince passed out of the palace and on to the hill-side without being arrested or stopped by a single soldier!

She sat staring at the door through which he had gone, as if in a dream. The mists had closed in again on the hills outside. The sun was hidden.

At last she roused herself.

"We will not see any more suitors for a year and a day," she said.

"A very proper sort of young man that!" were the King's words to the Lord Chamberlain as he left the throne-room.

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A year and a day slipped by, and the time came when the Prince of Euphalia was due to return to the palace.

The Princess was in a fever of excitement. A hundred times she went and looked out of the window to see if the Prince were coming. The day wore on, but there was no sign of him. A thin autumnal mist hung about the hills and valleys, but it was not thick enough to hide the view of the road which led up to the palace gates. The afternoon went slowly by. At last the Princess could bear it no longer.

"He is dead," she said. "I must go and find him."

Putting on her simplest dress, she went out by herself into the fast gathering twilight, and along the road which led from the palace to the hills.

She had not gone very far when she saw the figure of a man sitting by the roadside.

As she came nearer she perceived that his clothes were wet through, torn, and ragged. He sat with his head buried in his hands; beside him on the ground lay a dirty little wooden bowl.

It was the Prince of Euphalia; but where were his sunny smile and his proud bearing?

The Princess hurried forward and knelt down beside him.

The mist from the hills floated up and toward them, blotting out the castle and the hills and valleys alike.

"Could you not get a bowl full of mist?" she said.

"Alas, no, lady!" said the Prince sadly, without looking up. "The hills are full of it, the holes are full of it, but I cannot get a bowl full of it. I have been up hill and down dale. Among the hill-tops and in the deep valleys my bowl seemed full of mist, but whenever I came to the town again it all disappeared. The time for finding the mist has gone by. I dare not go to the palace and say that I have failed. I told the Princess the bowl was full of love for her, and that when I came back it would be full of the mist she wanted. It is full of love still, but, alas! there is no mist at all."

"Oh yes, there is!" said the Princess softly. "See, the bowl is full of mist!"

She held it up. All things were misty to her at that moment, for her beautiful dark eyes were full of tears. The Prince looked up at her, and at that moment a golden glow shone through the clouds all about them.

"Is it you?" he said. "Have you yourself come to meet me?"

"Yes, indeed," said she. "If I had not come you would never have known that the bowl is full of mist—quite brimming over."

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"Why, so it is!" said the Prince, for his blue eyes were quite misty too.

Hand in hand they went back to the palace. Of course they were married and lived happily ever after, and among the Princess's most treasured possessions was a little wooden bowl, that she had once seen full of mist.

blue

ace.

pily

most

owl,

II

THE HAZEL NUT

*Her chariot is an empty hazel nut
Made by the joiner squirrel.*

SHAKESPEARE

IT was a glorious autumn.

Every evening the clear sun set pink and gold behind the clouds.

Every morning he chased them away as he rose over the yellow-tipped wood.

Never were seen such colours as were the leaves that year—pale yellow, flame-orange, deep red and golden-brown. Truly the wood looked a magic place!

As for the nuts—why, there was no counting them! Chestnuts, beech and hazel were in profusion everywhere. The only sound to be heard in the wood was when one or other of them dropped with a soft thud on to the ground.

The berries, too, were rounder, redder and brighter than they had ever been before.

Yes, indeed, it was a wonderful autumn.

The whole wood seemed hushed and silent in expectation of some great event; but those who listened carefully might have heard the Squirrel

bustling about very busily, or might have caught a glimpse of little Mrs Field Mouse scurrying through the hedge. The leaves, too, seemed from time to time to whisper hurriedly together.

For what was everything waiting?

If you had gone into the wood at midnight you would have found out the secret soon enough.

"How's your fancy dress, Pippito? Is it nearly ready?"

"Oh, mine? Well it's getting redder every day. I tried it on this afternoon. What fun we shall have!"

"Yes; but I'm sorry it is our last summer dance. The Queen says we can't possibly have another, the Squirrel and Mrs Field Mouse are getting so terribly sleepy. As for Mr Mole, I caught him snoring only yesterday, and gave him a pretty good pinch I promise you!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed all the little fairies. "The Queen would be terribly annoyed if he went to sleep in the middle of her last out-of-doors party; especially as it is mostly given for him, and Field Mouse and Squirrel and all those other old sleepy-heads who go off to sleep all through the winter!"

"Let's go and try on our dresses again, and see about the lanterns and carriages!"

Away they all flew—one to this leaf and one

to that—because of course you knew that the pretty coloured leaves were the fairies' fancy dresses hanging up for the sun and mist to colour them properly for the Queen's Ball. And the berries—why, they were the fairy lanterns; and the empty nut-shells their carriages. It wasn't considered at all proper to fly to a fairy party, and you had to have your carriage, and a beetle or two to draw it.

It was the Squirrel who was the carriage maker, and indeed the fairies' carpenter-in-chief. He ate up the insides of the nuts and chipped and chopped the empty shells till they made the most charming little carriages imaginable.

And now he too was very busy getting ready for the Queen's last summer party, and directly it was over he intended to go to sleep for the winter.

Yes, and it was for that very party that the whole wood was waiting, hushed in expectation.

About three nights before the evening fixed for the ball by the Fairy Queen there was tremendous excitement in the wood.

"Yes, but the Queen says——"

"It's no use your telling us *what* the Queen says! Of course she can't ride on thistledown at this time of year. Why, it has all blown away long ago!"

"Anyway she has absolutely refused to ride.

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in any of last year's chariots, though there is quite a good Beech Nut in the Royal Stables."

"If we do not hurry up and get her a really good chariot she probably will refuse to come to the party altogether; and you know perfectly well that nobody will want to dance unless the Queen is there."

"Oh dear, oh dear," piped another very shrill voice, "and I was sure she would notice my dress. It is such a gorgeous flame colour."

"Be quiet, Pippito," shouted the first fairy. "Of course if the Queen doesn't come to the party there won't be any colour worth speaking of in your dress at all. The colours never show properly unless the Queen is there."

"Well, it all points to this," said another, "we must get her a new chariot somehow before tomorrow. Let us all go and ask the Squirrel to make us one."

So away they flew; and the swish of their wings was as a light breeze whispering through the waiting wood.

The Squirrel was busy filling his store cupboard, and had just put into it a most beautiful hazel nut.

"Bother you and your parties!" said he. "I am just as sleepy as I can possibly be," and he gave a tremendous yawn, which frightened all the little fairies very much.

"Please don't do that!" shrieked Pippito,

who, somehow, seemed always to be talking. "Besides, you must keep awake till after to-morrow or you won't see my dress. It is hanging above you now, and is quite perfectly lovely!"

"Bother you and your dresses!" said the Squirrel again. "Why can't you go to sleep sensibly like Mr Mole and old Mrs Field Mouse yonder. Chariot indeed! I've made quite enough chariots for you this summer already. As soon as this party is over, I shall get into my store cupboard and go to sleep, and when I wake up the first thing I shall eat is that beautiful hazel nut. I've put it in last on purpose."

"But couldn't you crack it now?" hazarded one fairy, "and then you could make the shell into a Hazel Chariot for the Queen."

"No, I couldn't crack it now! I tell you I am thoroughly sleepy," and the Squirrel yawned again.

"Oh dear!" said Pippito. "Oh dear! Oh dear! But it is for the Queen. Surely you would not disappoint *her*."

"I don't care whom I disappoint," said the Squirrel. "The Queen has never once been to see my store cupboard; and she has not even promised me and Mrs Field Mouse a good dream. I tell you again I am thoroughly sleepy."

"It is no use!" said the fairies sadly, and they

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all began to cry. The next morning the ground was quite wet with their tears.

The whole of the next day was grey and drear. Even the beautiful fancy dresses seemed somehow to have lost their colour. A thick mist hung about the wood. One could hear a faint drip, drip, as of little tears falling on the ground. In the evening a sad-looking moon shone through the damp haze.

The Squirrel lay in his store cupboard. "Tomorrow night we shall have this party," said he, "and then—ah-h-h——" And he stretched himself in anticipation of the glorious long sleep that lay before him.

Just then he heard a very faint 'tap! tap! tap!' on the outside of his store cupboard.

"What's that?" he said sleepily.

"Only me," said a tiny musical voice.

"Come in then," said he.

And in she came.

It was difficult to say exactly in what colour she was dressed. Her light, airy little cloak seemed to shine like the reflection of a sunset, but beneath it was a shimmer of deep blue, like the colour of the sky at night. She had on a crown of tiny glowing berries. Over her head she held a fairy umbrella, a little toadstool, bright flame colour on the outside. She must have been some one from the Palace, for only members of the Royal Household were allowed umbrellas

like that! Her glimmering wings were folded close beneath her cloak.

Her hair was pure moon colour. Her eyes like two stars.

She half floated, half danced up to the Squirrel.

"May I see your store cupboard?" said she.

The Squirrel, surly old fellow that he was, simply could not refuse her.

He showed her everything, and last of all he showed her his most beautiful hazel nut.

"That's the one I'm going to eat first when I wake up," said he. "Those chippity little fairies wanted me to crack it now, and make the shell into a chariot for their Queen—but the inside wouldn't keep, you know, and I should not have it to eat when I wake up."

"Are you going to the party?" said the musical little voice.

"Oh yes! It is partly for me they are having it. A sort of good-bye, you know, to me, and Mrs Field Mouse, and Mr Mole, and a few others."

"I see. What a pity the Queen won't be there to see you, and thank you for all you have done for her!"

"Well, I have not done much," said the Squirrel, "only a few chariots now and then."

"Good-bye," came the musical little voice again. "I hope you'll sleep well. Perhaps

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there will be a beautiful dream for you somewhere."

She skipped on to a branch which raised her well from the floor of the store cupboard. Then she stood on the very tips of her little toes, and put her tiny arms as far round the Squirrel's neck as they would go.

"Good-night," she said, and then she was gone.

The Squirrel moved about uneasily in his store cupboard, "I wonder——" he began. Then he put his head out and called out softly: "Mr Mole! Have you ever seen the Queen? Does she wear a blue dress?"

"It's no use asking me," came a sleepy voice out of the darkness. "I am blind. I can't see anything."

"Mrs Field Mouse!" called out the Squirrel again. "Have you ever seen the Queen? Has she got eyes like stars?"

"Dear me!" answered a little squeaking voice. "I never look at anybody; either at their eyes or at anything else about them. I am far too frightened. I just skip past them as fast as ever I can."

"Well, I really do wonder," said the Squirrel again. Then he went deliberately up to the beautiful hazel nut, and cracked it right in two!

It was the night of the party at last. A

glorious moon had risen, and the West Wind had already arrived to lead the band.

Such a fluttering, and a chattering, as all the little fairies got into their fancy dresses.

"Look at me!" shouted Pippito. "Am I not truly fine?" and he twirled a pirouette with his nose in the air.

"Yes, and the Queen is coming after all!" said another. "There was a most beautiful Hazel Nut Chariot found outside the Palace door this morning."

"Hooray! Hooray!" shouted all the little fairies at once.

What a rustling and a bustling as the company began to arrive! Some in empty Horse Chestnut Shells. Some in Acorn Cups. Three or four in a Sweet Chestnut Shell drawn by six little green beetles.

The moon shone brightly. The berries glowed like flames. The fairies collected into a large crowd. Old Mr Mole was there in a new waistcoat; and Mrs Field Mouse, very shy; and the Squirrel with his tail specially brushed for the occasion. Last of all came the Queen herself in a Hazel Nut Chariot, so polished that you could see your face in it, and drawn by twelve late little ladybirds.

The Squirrel looked at her. Yes, her dress was a deep blue, and her eyes did shine like stars!

"Let the ball begin," said she.

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The West Wind piped up with all his might, and the fairies in their dresses of red, and gold, and brown, whirled madly hither and thither. Up and down, round and round, twisting in spirals, or eddying in circles, they chased each other the whole wood through. Even old Mr Mole slid in and out quite gaily among them, and as for Mrs Field Mouse, she got so out of breath that she hardly knew which way she was going. The Squirrel, too, gave such a splendid exhibition of leaping that no one would have thought he had ever been sleepy in his life!

Truly they all made a merry night of it! The fairies' fancy dresses grew so bewitched toward morning that they went on dancing all by themselves. For, at cockcrow, the merry party ceased. Fairies, and beetles, squirrel, mole, and field mouse all hurried home to bed. The Queen's last outdoor party that year was over, and all that was left of it the next morning was a heap of the fairies' dresses still whirling madly through the wood, and the empty chariots lying at the foot of the trees.

But the strange thing about the whole affair was that when the Squirrel got back to his store cupboard and went off to sleep for the winter, he found a beautiful dream waiting for him in the place where his hazel nut had lain—and the dream was all about the Fairy Queen.

III

THE TWILIGHT FAIRY

Twilight is the time of the furniture.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

HAVE you ever been in bed in the twilight before it is quite dark? As the room grows dimmer and dimmer, have you ever seen the Nursery Furniture fade away piece by piece?

First the table; then the chairs; then the boxes of bricks and dollies' tea things in the corner; then the chest of drawers, all but the drawer handles; then the rocking-horse and the doll's house; then the pictures, all but their frames and glass, which go later; then the looking-glass; then the clock, which leaves its tick behind; then the two brass knobs at the end of your bed; and last of all the chink at the top of the blind which shows you where the window ends.

It is the Twilight Fairy who takes them all away.

In the morning she brings them safely back, one by one, except that she brings the chink back first, and then the brass knobs, and so on, till last of all come the chairs and table.

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When everything is once more back in its place, she disappears up the chimney in her morning flame-coloured dress, which matches so beautifully with the nursery fire that Nurse has just lighted.

Where does the Twilight Fairy take the furniture to? What does it do when it gets there? Why if we get out of bed in the dark are the *corners* of everything there just as usual? Why if we turn on the light is everything in its ordinary place, though we have seen it melt away, piece by piece, before our very eyes?

This is the story of a little girl who made friends with the Twilight Fairy, and found out all these things.

The little girl's name was Ella.

She always went to bed very early, so she knew the Twilight Fairy very well. Very, very often she had watched her, as, in her grey and silver dress, she had stood in the chink at the top of the window and called the pieces of furniture away one by one. Very, very often she had seen her, in blue and gold, flitting away up the chimney when Nurse lit the nursery fire in the morning.

She did so wonder where they went, and if the Bubbles Boy in the picture ever really blew away that bubble from his pipe; and if Cherry Ripe ever ate the cherries that she held so demurely in her lap; and if the Angel Boys

could sing real music ; and if the rocking-horse galloped ; and the bricks made themselves into boats ; and the chairs into shops, and, oh, well, dozens of other things.

At last she determined to do a very bold thing, for she made up her mind to ask the Twilight Fairy herself.

"Nurse," she said one night when she was going to bed, "Nurse, when is it a good time to speak to fairies ?"

"Well, I don't know," said Nurse, who was old and understanding. "All Hallowe'en I should think would be as good a night as any."

"And when is that ?" asked Ella.

"Why, to-morrow week," answered Nurse.

So Ella decided to speak to the Twilight Fairy on All Hallowe'en. A week seemed a terribly long time to wait, but Ella had plenty of games to play. One day she turned the Nursery Table upside down and put the cloth over its legs to make a wigwam. Another day she made the Chairs into a grand shop with three departments and three windows. Some of the other Chairs she made into a taxi and drove along to three or four parties. She gave a dolls' tea-party in the Doll's House. She made a submarine with her Bricks, and put all her prisoners into the very darkest corner of the Wardrobe. She rode the Rocking-Horse

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astride as a knight on his charger. Best of all, Christmas was not so very far away, and she finished one of her presents and put it into her secret drawer in the Chest of Drawers.

So the week passed quickly enough, and All Hallowe'en found her tucked, safe and snug, in bed.

Almost before Nurse had put out the light the Twilight Fairy was peeping in through the chink in the window and beckoning to the furniture.

Already the Chairs had melted away, and the Table, all but one corner, had followed them.

"Twilight Fairy! Twilight Fairy!" whispered Ella.

There was no answer.

"Twilight Fairy! Twilight Fairy!" whispered Ella, rather louder.

Still no answer, but softly and silently the furniture was stealing away piece by piece.

"Twilight Fairy! Twilight Fairy!" whispered Ella again, louder still.

The room seemed almost empty, but the Clock had left his tick behind.

"Tick! Tick! Tick! Tick!" said he.

And then Ella heard a musical, chiming little voice rather like the Clock's bell.

"Come! Out! With! Me!! Come! Out! With! Me—Come!!!"

The Twilight Fairy stole in ever so softly, just

touched Ella's eyes with her silvery-grey feathery wings, and in what seemed to Ella less than no time, she and the fairy had both melted and floated far away.

They soon found themselves in a very big, very brilliantly lighted room. Like, yet unlike, Ella's very own Nursery.

There was a great deal of noise going on, shouting and singing and laughing; and a great deal of movement, too. It was some minutes before Ella was able to distinguish between the different sounds and sights.

Soon she made out a loud creaking at her side. She turned her head. "It sounded so like the creaking of our old Nursery Chest of Drawers," she said.

Then, all of a sudden, she understood, and she clapped her hands and laughed with joy.

It *was* the old Nursery Chest of Drawers!

Every bit of the Nursery Furniture was here too—but they had left all their corners behind!—and they had all come alive!

The Table, the Chairs, the Rocking-Horse, the Bricks, were all playing the games she had played with them, but, oh! *so* much better.

"Creak! Squeak!" said the old Chest of Drawers at her side. "I'm fairly bursting, I am, fairly bursting! Every night so full of secrets that how they're going to get another one in /

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don't know. Fairly bursting," and he squeaked open a drawer to show what was inside.

"Oh, we can't stop and talk to you, you old creaking thing," shouted two Chairs, "or we shall never get to the party in time. Hi! get out of the way! We're a taxi, and we are ever so late."

The Chairs whizzed past, for all the world like a real taxi.

Ella went farther into the room.

"Oh, what a lovely shop!" said she.

Indeed it was a lovely shop, even though it was all made of live Chairs. There were simply dozens of departments, and absolutely dazzling shop windows filled with every sort of elegant finery. Best of all there was a real cashier's desk made by the old Baby's High Chair. Ella longed to become Cashier there and then.

But her attention was suddenly diverted toward the centre of the room, where stood the most wonderful wigwam, with real smoke. Could it possibly be her old friend the Nursery Table? There was a real skin bed inside.

"How cosy! How lovely and cosy!" cried Ella.

Then, galloping past her, snorted a snow-white charger.

"Mount me! Mount me!" shouted he.

Ella got on his back and was soon in front of

a great and brilliantly lighted mansion, like, but yet unlike, her old Doll's House at home.

Sounds of music came from the open windows.

She dismounted and knocked at the Front door.

It was opened by a neat maid.

There was a party in the drawing-room, and a feast in the kitchen, and simply dozens of children having their baths and going to bed, four and five in a bed, in the nursery.

Ella stayed a short while and then went out again.

A swift submarine sailed toward her. The Bricks of which it was made had all joined together beautifully—and there were no gaps in between them.

She climbed in and looked through the periscope.

"The enemy is coming!" she cried.

They discharged a torpedo. She could hear it crashing through the enemy's boat.

"You are all our prisoners!" shouted she, as she rescued the enemy and imprisoned them in the darkest dungeon—so much roomier than the Wardrobe used to look in the old Nursery.

When the dungeon door was securely locked she turned, and found herself face to face with a little boy of about her own age. He carried bowl and pipe, and was dressed in a green velvet suit.

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"Come and blow bubbles with me," said he, "it is so very dull all by myself."

They spent a very happy time together, and were soon joined by a little girl in a white frock and blue sash.

"Do have some of my cherries," said she. "I'm sure you must be hungry."

"How lovely," said Ella, and she munched and munched, and they must have been magic cherries, because they never got any less.

Suddenly she looked up, for from above her head came the most exquisite music. It was almost like the music in church, and she could see dimly four little angel faces singing a sweet and heavenly melody.

She had listened spell-bound for what seemed to her a long while, when she became conscious of a growing desire to know the time.

She could see the Clock, but as he was not ticking she thought he must have stopped.

"It's all right," shouted he. "I'm going, but I've left my tick behind. It's half-past two."

Then all of a sudden there was a great commotion.

"Get! Read-y! Quick!! Get! Read-y! Quick!! Go!!" came the Twilight Fairy's chiming voice.

In a moment there was silence, and the room was all in darkness.

Ella was not at all frightened, for she had a

feeling that they would soon all come back—and so they did, and all together.

"All your fault that we had to go," said the Bubbles Boy to her. "You called out in your sleep and your Nurse turned on the light, so of course we had to be there. Never do for us to be away when there is any light about." And he blew a delicate bubble right across the room.

So the revel went on.

Ella had never enjoyed herself so much in all her life before.

At last the Fairy spoke again in her chiming, bell-like voice.

"Go! Back! To! Bed!! Go! Quick-ly! Back!! Go! Soft-ly! Back!! Go! Gent-ly! Back!!

"Go!—Go!—Go!—I!—Will!—Come!"

She touched Ella's eyelids once more with her soft wings.

In a twinkling Ella was back in bed, and the Twilight Fairy was at the chink in the window.

Piece by piece the Furniture was appearing in its old place. Pictures, Rocking-Horse, Brick Box, Doll's House, Wardrobe, Table, Chairs, Clock. Last of all came the old Chest of Drawers (though his corners had been there all the time), still creaking softly to himself, "Se-crets, se-crets."

Then, half awake and half asleep, Ella saw Nurse get up and light the fire.

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Pop! Crackle! Crackle! went the flames, as, blue and gold, they followed each other up the chimney. Close in among them was the Twilight Fairy, dressed, too, in blue and gold, with her soft grey wings spread high above her head.

Her voice rose and fell with the chiming of the Nursery Clock, once more back in its old place on the mantelpiece.

"Good-bye! El-la!! I'll! see! you! soon!!

"Good-bye! El-la!! I'll! see! you! soon!!

"Good! Bye! Good! Bye! Good! Bye! Good——" and she was gone.

"Clock's just striking seven! Up you get!" said Nurse, as she pulled up the blind and let in the clear autumn sunshine.

Ella looked round the room.

"How dear everything is!" she said. "And I've had *such* a lovely night."

"Ah, it was All Hallowe'en," said Nurse wisely.

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NOVEMBER

I. FALLING LEAVES

II. ST MARTIN'S SUMMER

III. THE GIANT WHO MARRIED A
MORTAL PRINCESS

I

FALLING LEAVES

Day by day the dead leaves fall and melt.

WM. ALLINGHAM

IT was a chill, wet evening in November. Every day the dead leaves had been falling silently from the old beech-tree, until there were left only two at the end of a branch, and one solitary nut.

"I'm nearly dead," said one leaf to another. "I shall fall soon. The sap left off rising a long time ago."

"What will happen to us when we fall?" asked the second. "Some of the others went dancing away, but most of them seem to be melting into the ground. Shall we melt too?"

"I don't know," said the first leaf. "Ask the beech nut, she's just about to drop."

"Yes; but I drop when I'm ripe, and *you* drop when you're dead," said the beech nut sharply. "And that just makes the difference. When I drop I shall just sink into the ground and go to sleep for a bit, and before so very long I shall be sending out a root and a shoot of my own, and one of these days I shall be a fine tree and bear leaves like you."

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"And we, what shall we do?"

"Oh, nothing," said the beech nut, and fell with a contemptuous plop! on to the ground.

"Nothing!" said the leaves sadly one to another. "Nothing! Perhaps we sha'n't even melt!" and a great tear gathered on the tip of each.

Then a little breeze came along and whispered to the leaves:

"Hush, hush, do not cry. You are wanted down there. Without you the little beech nut will never have a root or a shoot. Fall gently one by one, melt softly into the earth, and make it good and sweet and rich. Hush, hush, hush!"

"Brother," said one leaf to the other, "I'm going. Good-bye. We are wanted down there," and without a sound he floated gently on to the ground beneath, and soon began to melt away into the earth.

"Farewell, brother," said the second leaf, as he watched him fall. "I am coming, for we are wanted down there," and slowly and silently he too fell to the ground close by his brother, and both of them lay on the beech nut.

And the next spring a little beech-tree raised its first two green leaves in that very place.

"I should never have grown so strong without the dead beech leaves," said he, as he smiled up at the sun.

II

ST MARTIN'S SUMMER

And there shall be some peace there.

W. B. YEATS

THERE was once upon a time a young Prince who set forth to seek his fortune. His father gave him some excellent advice, together with a bright suit of armour, a sharp sword, and a shining shield; his mother gave him her blessing and a golden scarf; and his little sweetheart, the Princess Dorimène, gave him her love, and clasped round his neck a golden chain on which was hung her portrait set in pearls.

Thus equipped the youthful Prince set forth.

For the first few days his way lay through flowery meadows, by sweet woodlands, and along gentle-flowing streams, but there was not much of a fortune to be found in such a country as that, and the Prince was delighted when he suddenly came upon a large sign-post with the words, "To the Giant's Castle," written on it in large black letters.

He immediately took the path toward which the sign-post was pointing.

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"Here indeed," thought he, "is the kind of place in which to seek my fortune, and if I do not actually find it in the Giant's Castle, he will surely tell me what road to take."

The path was gradually growing exceedingly dusty and very hot. The Prince also noticed that the country-side had very much changed, and that everything had a shrivelled and parched-up appearance. Some of the bushes by the roadside looked as if they had been scorched by a great fire.

The Giant's Castle was nowhere to be seen, but there was a small hovel at the side of the road, and the Prince decided to inquire whether he was on the right path.

He knocked at the door.

It was opened by a little girl who somehow reminded him of the Princess Dorimène.

"Good-evening," said he. "Is this the way to the Giant's Castle?"

"Yes," said she; "but do not go near it. The Giant is terrible, and has such flaming eyes that whatever he looks upon is immediately set on fire."

"I am on my way to seek my fortune," said the Prince, "and I feel that perhaps it may lie in the Giant's Castle. Therefore I cannot pass by."

"Well, if you must enter," said the little girl, "creep in behind the door until the Giant is

asleep, then take your mother's golden scarf and bandage his eyes, and then you can ask him anything you wish. But beware," she continued, "of the handmaidens in the Giant's Castle, for they are evil. If you should feel tempted to carry one of them off, look at the picture which is hanging round your neck and you will be safe."

The Prince involuntarily glanced down at the picture and was once more struck by the likeness of the little girl to the Princess Dorimène.

"Excuse me," said he, but the little girl had already shut the door, and, try as he would, he could not open it.

He took his way along the burnt-up road until a sudden turn in the path brought him face to face with the Giant's Castle.

It was the largest house the Prince had ever seen, and was made entirely of brass. From all the windows were issuing flames and smoke. There was a crowd of servants and attendants in the courtyard who seemed to be carrying out their ordinary occupations without paying any heed to the smoke or the flames. The Prince noticed that they all wore armour and had brass helmets on their heads.

It was extremely hot, almost stifling, in the courtyard. Unperceived, the Prince made his way up the front steps and crept behind the great front door, whence he could see into the

Giant's banqueting-room on one side and the bedroom on the other. Presently he heard heavy footsteps approaching, and the Giant entered the banqueting-room.

The Prince stared at him.

He was enormously big, of course, but the extraordinary thing about him was not his massive form, but his terrifying eyes, from which shot flames of fire in all directions.

The Giant looked down on one of the handmaidens who was preparing the supper. Immediately she caught fire and was soon a heap of ashes. Presently another maiden entered, dressed in cloth of gold, with a golden cap upon her head. She seated herself opposite the Giant at the great dining-table. Her dress was of some non-inflammable material, for the flames from the Giant's eyes flickered and danced about her, but did not hurt her.

The Prince gazed at her in admiration and felt his heart grow hot within him. "When the Giant is asleep I will carry you off," said he to himself. Then he remembered the little girl's words and looked down at his picture of the Princess Dorimène, and his heart grew cool again.

When he looked up the golden handmaiden had disappeared, and the Giant had gone into his bedroom and shut the door.

The Prince waited silently, his heart beating

with excitement. Soon the sound of terrific snores coming from the bedroom told him that the Giant was asleep.

The Prince crept from his hiding-place with his mother's golden scarf in his hand.

Softly he opened the bedroom door, and walked on tiptoe up to the great bed where the Giant was sleeping with his eyes tight shut.

Quick as lightning, the Prince tied the golden scarf as tightly as he could round the Giant's head and over his eyes.

The Giant woke up with a roar, but he did not pull off the bandage, for the Prince waved his sword and shouted :

"If you try to touch the bandage I will put your eyes out !"

"What do you want with me ?" growled the Giant.

"I am on the way to seek my fortune," said the Prince, "and I want you to tell me where it lies."

"Well, the quickest way to find it is to go the way you have come," answered the Giant; "but if you want your full fortune, you can only get it by attaining your full manhood, and when you have done that you will find your fortune awaiting you in the Land of St Martin, which is a land of memories, and of a second summer."

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"And how can I attain full manhood, and find the way to the Land of St Martin?" asked the Prince.

"You must grope your way through the Land of Fogs, and climb the mountain of glass, and go under the great gateway," said the Giant. "On the other side of the gateway is a large mirror in which you will see yourself. If, on seeing yourself, you find you have attained full manhood, the path to St Martin's Land will lie straight before you, and by the fireside of the King you will find your full fortune. But, if I were you, I would be content with the shorter way, and go straight home the way you have come."

"There is no fortune to be found at home," said the Prince. "I will set out for the Land of Fogs immediately."

"Do as you please," said the Giant. "It is no small fortune that awaits you."

The Prince left the room and shut the door. Then he ran down the steps and out of the Castle, but he had left his mother's scarf behind. As he ran along the burning road that led from the Castle to the Land of Fogs, he heard some one open a window behind him. Looking round, he saw his golden scarf flung into the courtyard, and two tongues of flame dart out of the window, no doubt issuing from the Giant's terrible eyes. Undaunted, he went on his way and soon found himself in the Land of Fogs.

Truly the country was rightly named, for he had no sooner entered it than a thick yellow fog closed in upon him on every side. It was dark and seemed to prick his eyes ; it choked him too, and the taste of it was horrible.

As he proceeded the fog seemed to get thicker and to cling more around him. Strange shapes as of beasts and warriors loomed up at him, and seemed about to set on him. He drew his sword and plunged it at them and they disappeared, only to come up again a little farther in front of him and menace him as before. The path became more and more difficult to find. From time to time he was forced to bend down and feel for it on hands and knees.

"This armour is heavy and old-fashioned," said he when he had been groping about for the path for some time. "'Twas the best my father could give me, but it is of no use to me here." So he took the armour off and cast it from him, and the helmet and shield also, and beat his way on, in shirt and breeches, with his drawn sword in his hand.

The fog drifted from time to time, and then it would lighten, but this only served to make his journey more difficult, for in the light intervals many conflicting paths branched out before him and he could not tell which of them he should take, and the shadowy forms of beasts

and men would attack him, now on this side, now on that, till he was fain to lie down by the roadside in utter weariness.

As he lay there a little figure crept out of the yellow fog and crouched down beside him. It was a girl's figure, and her face reminded him of the Princess Dorimène, except that she looked a little older and sadder than the Princess used to look.

"Are you looking for the path to the mountain of glass?" said she. "If you will keep close behind me I will lead you to it. It is frightening at first, but if, when I leave you, you look at the portrait of the Princess Dorimène, you will find that your fear will disappear."

So the Prince took courage, and rose and followed the girlish figure through the yellow, clinging fog. At times the fog was so thick that he could hardly see her, but he somehow drove it away, sword in hand.

Suddenly the fog lifted, and the Prince beheld in front of him the mountain of glass.

It was huge and bright and shining. Its walls were a sheer precipice, and of a terrifying smoothness.

"I can never climb it!" he said in despair.

Then he remembered the girl's words, and, taking out the picture, he looked long and steadily at the face of the Princess Dorimène. As he did

so his fears disappeared, and he was struck once again with the girl's likeness to the Princess. He raised his eyes.

"Excuse me," he began — but she had vanished.

Then the Prince tried to cut steps in the glass mountain with his sword, but it was quite impossible, the sword merely glanced off the polished surface.

"My sword is useless here," said he. "My father thought it would help me, but I must think out something for myself now."

So he cast away his sword and started to climb the mountain on hands and knees.

Three times he tried, and three times he slipped down again to the foot of the mountain. Then he took off boots and stockings and made a fresh attempt.

Slowly and painfully he made his way up. For each two feet he climbed he slipped one foot back. His hands and feet were soon torn and bleeding, and his clothing hung in tatters all about him; but slowly, very slowly, the top of the mountain of glass grew nearer, and at last he could see quite clearly the large black gateway on the top of it.

He made yet one more effort and then, worn out with fatigue, he lay stretched prone on the glass before the gateway.

Here his courage once more failed him. The

gateway was perfectly black, and there was nothing but blackness on the other side.

He heard a sudden movement and a woman came and sat beside him on the glass. Her face reminded him strongly of the Princess Dorimène, but she was a great deal older than the Princess.

"I cannot come with you," she said. "You must go through the gateway alone. But take courage, and when the passage seems blackest, look at your picture of the Princess Dorimène."

The Prince rose slowly to his feet and walked on through the centre of the gateway. Here the blackness was truly appalling.

He pulled out the picture of the Princess Dorimène and was once more struck with the woman's likeness to the Princess.

"Excuse me," he began, but she had vanished, and so had the darkness; for while he had been looking at the portrait he had come through to the other side of the gateway.

His way was blocked by an enormous mirror.

When he looked into the mirror he could see nothing but the picture of the Princess Dorimène, magnified twenty times and completely hiding everything else.

"The Giant said I would see myself," thought the Prince, "and I can see nothing but the picture of the Princess Dorimène. I shall have

to throw even that, too, away if I would find my fortune."

He took the chain from round his neck and looked long and lovingly at the picture.

"It must be a great fortune to be better than this," said he sadly as he laid the picture on the ground.

Once more he looked into the mirror and saw before him the image of a man in the full prime of manhood. His eyes were clear and bright with the light of victory. He was dressed from top to toe in shining silver armour, which, though of a new design, had something strangely familiar about it. On his head was a shining helmet, at his feet lay a polished shield and a sharp bright sword.

It was like, yet unlike, the youthful Prince who had started to find his fortune, yet older, graver, stronger. Could it be?

He made a movement. The image in the mirror moved also.

Yes, it was—himself!

He stooped to pick up the sword and shield. How he had become re-clothed in armour he had no idea. He searched on the ground for the picture of the Princess Dorimène, but it was gone.

When he raised his head, the great mirror had vanished also. In its stead there stretched a broad white road leading straight into the Land of St Martin.

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In St Martin's Land all was peaceful summertime. A soft golden light hung over the landscape, shading to a rosy pink on the far horizon. The road was bordered on either side with great beech-trees, the leaves a golden-brown; beyond them stretched a wide forest, and the forest trees were pink and gold, and their leaves crackled as they fell. Other sound there was none.

The beautiful, silent road led straight to the King's palace.

As the Prince approached he was struck with astonishment, for the palace resembled in every detail his own old home.

Soft blue smoke was curling straight and peacefully from the chimneys. The rays of the setting sun fell full upon the palace front and lit up every stone of it. The Prince noticed that the stones were more cracked and crumbling than of old, and that there was more ivy on the walls. White fan-tailed pigeons cooed and strutted in the courtyard. There was the familiar dog in the gateway, but older, much older. There were the familiar servants in the corridors, but they seemed older too.

The Prince went straight to the Great Hall.

On either side of the wide fireplace, where blazed and crackled a cheery wood fire, sat the King and Queen. They were old, too, and bent, but the same glow of peace and sunlight

was upon them as rested upon the whole palace.

Beside the Queen, and working upon the same embroidery frame, sat a most beautiful woman. The Prince did not recognize her at first. When he reached the group by the fireplace she raised her head and smiled.

It was the Princess Dorimène.

"Have you found your fortune?" asked she.

"Yes," he answered simply, and he kissed her hand.

III

THE GIANT WHO MARRIED A MORTAL PRINCESS

*There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.
She gave them some broth without any bread,
Then whipped them all soundly and sent them to bed.*

OLD RHYME

THERE was once upon a time a Giant who had set his heart upon marrying a mortal Princess, and before so very long he found one, young and beautiful.

So he carried her off in his pocket to his great Castle.

When they reached the door the Princess peeped out of his pocket and said : "Dear me ! your house is much too large ! I should be terrified to death to live in such a place !"

So he put her on the dining-room table.

"Dear me !" said she again. "This table is far too large. I should be terrified to death to live beside such huge knives and forks."

"Fastidious Flumkins !" said the Giant.

So he took her off the table and placed her in one of the red felt bedroom slippers that were lying in front of the dining-room fire.

Giant who Married a Mortal Princess 227

"Yes," said she, "this is just right. I will live here."

So it happened that, like another Giant's wife of whom perhaps you may have heard, when she was At Home she lived in one of the Giant's shoes, and when she was Not At Home she lived in the other, and a very cosy and comfortable existence she had of it.

Or, rather, a very cosy and comfortable existence she would have had of it, if it had not been for the children!

Not her own—for she had none—but those whom she saved from the Giant.

You must know that the Giant had been in the habit of eating up a plump child every evening for supper.

He would come in and put the child into one of the spoons on the dining-room table; and then, while he went to get his boots off, slippity! pippity! the Giant's Wife would creep up the table leg and take the child back with her into the shoe.

"Where's my child?" the Giant would roar out, as soon as he had got his boots off.

"Oh, I am just keeping him in the shoe to make him a bit fatter for you," she would say. "And if you would just let me have a spoonful of broth for him, he will be beautifully fat in a very short while."

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"Very well, take some broth, and some bread too," the Giant would say.

So she would take a giant's teaspoonful of broth, which was about as much as a small bathful; but the Giant's bread was so hard that she could not break off even so much as a crumb, so the children had to go without.

Well, when she had been doing this every night for about a fortnight, things began to get a little cramped in the shoe, and a good deal of quarrelling went on; and by the end of another fortnight she had to betake herself constantly to the Not At Home shoe to escape from the noise; and she really began to be at her wits' end as to what to do next.

Having so many children to take care of, too, was beginning to make her look old before her time, and any one who had never seen her before would certainly have taken her for an old, old woman.

The shoe grew fuller and fuller of children every day, and as for the quarrelling!

At last, one night, the children had been so cramped for room, and had stamped on each other's toes so hard, that they none of them knew which were their own toes and which were somebody else's.

There was such a pinching, and a scratching, and a fighting, that the Giant's Wife, who, after all, was only a mortal Princess, could bear it no longer.

Giant who Married a Mortal Princess 229

"Look here!" said she. "If you fight any more, I shall give you all a good whipping and send you to bed."

"I only wish you would," whimpered one. "My toes are black and blue."

"They're *not* your toes!" shouted another. "They're mine; and it's mine that are black and blue! mine, mine!" and he stamped hard just to show whose toes it was that he was talking about.

"And I'm sick of broth without any bread!" shouted a third.

"And I!" "And I!" "And I!" said they all.

"If you stamp on me any more I'll pinch you!" shouted the first child—and then the quarrelling began all over again.

Then the Giant's Wife grew very angry, and she whipped them all soundly one after the other (she had to take them outside the shoe to do it, there wasn't room inside), and then she packed them all off to bed.

But, as she was a mortal Princess, she quite spoilt all the good of the whipping; for, when they were safely in bed, she went round and kissed each one so sweetly that they quite forgot that they had ever been whipped at all.

"We won't do it again," they said; "but there is *so* little room in the shoe."

"And if we didn't have broth every day," they said, "we should be quite, quite good."

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"And if only you weren't so old," they said, "you would be quite, quite beautiful."

When they were all fast asleep, the Giant's Wife crept out of the shoe and sat on the Giant's fender considering.

"How old you look!" cried the Giant. "Why, you have grown into quite an old, old woman! And what are you crying about?"

"It's the children," said she. "There are so many of them I don't know what to do! I had to whip them all soundly to-night and send them to bed."

"Are not any of them fat enough to be eaten yet?" said the Giant.

"Oh dear, no!" said she. "They will never grow fat as long as they are so cramped for room, and have nothing but broth to eat, without any bread!"

"Why did you not say so before?" asked the Giant. "They had better come and live on the dining-room table, and you can go into the kitchen and cook them whatever you like."

"But the stove will be far too big for me," said she.

"I will get you a tiny doll's stove," said the Giant.

So the next day he got a Giant's tiny doll's stove, which was just the right size for her; and all the children came to live on the dining-room table.

Giant who Married a Mortal Princess 231

And a fine time they had of it I can assure you!

They used the knife-rests as see-saws, and swam in the soup-plates, and made salt castles in the salt cellars, and slept in the egg-cups. The Giant's Wife cooked all their favourite dishes for them, and gave them meringues and ices on Sundays. What with the exercise and the good food they were not long in becoming as plump and jolly as could be, and there was no quarrelling at all.

Merry, happy laughter greeted the Giant when he sat down to supper every evening, and one or two of the bolder ones would climb on to his face and try to tweak his nose, or run about over his bald head.

Strangely enough, too, the plumper and jollier they became, the less the Giant felt inclined to eat them; and the younger grew the Giant's Wife, till she was as beautiful and young-looking as when he first carried her off.

Wonderful stories she told the children too, and, as she was a mortal Princess, they were all about little boys and girls, mostly naughty ones, of whom she seemed to have a pretty wide experience.

Soon the Giant grew so fond of all the children that he could hardly bear to be away from them, and he took to coming home earlier and earlier for supper so that he might have them frolicking

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around him for a longer time before they went to bed, and he determined never to eat them at all.

At last he loved them so very dearly that he made up his mind to give them a wonderful present.

"My dear," said he to his wife, "I have made up my mind to give the children whatever they like to ask!"

The Giant's Wife, who was now young again, and very beautiful, smiled sadly.

"I know what they will ask," said she, for she was a mortal Princess.

"Well, whatever it is, they shall have it," said he.

So at supper-time he made all the children stand in a row in front of him.

"Listen," said he. "I have grown so fond of you, that I am going to promise to give you whatever you like to ask."

"Promise, certain, sure?" said the children, all in one breath.

"Promise, certain, sure," said the Giant.

"Then, please, we should like to go home," said they, with no hesitation whatever.

The Giant was dumbfounded.

"Go h-home?" he stammered. "But aren't you happy here? What about the fun on my dining-room table? What about the meringues and ices on Sundays? What about sleeping in egg-cups?"

Giant who Married a Mortal Princess 233

"We would much rather sleep in our own beds," said they.

"Well—I'm blessed!" said the Giant.

But, as he was a Giant, and as he had promised, certain, sure, he of course had to keep his promise; and before you could say 'Jack Robinson!' the children were all in their own little beds at home, and their stay in the Giant's Castle nothing more than a dream behind them.

Sometimes at night long afterward they would remember the times when they used to live in a shoe; and they would perhaps suddenly call to mind some of the stories that the Giant's Wife had told them—but they never saw her again.

"Ungrateful little ragamuffins!" was the Giant's remark when they had gone.

But to remind himself of the happy days when the children were with him he would often afterward call his wife "The little old woman that lived in a shoe," and she has gone by that name ever since—and, what is more, from that day to this neither he nor any other giant has ever eaten a child.

So you see what a good thing it was that a Giant once married a mortal Princess.

DECEMBER

I. HOLLY

II. THE AVENUE OF DREAMS

I

HOLLY

*Highty-tighty, Paradighty,
Clothèd all in green.
The King could not read it
No more could the Queen.
They sent for a Wise Man out of the East,
Who said it had horns but was not a beast.*

OLD RIDDLE

THERE was once upon a time a very war-like kingdom where they had never heard of Christmas. The men spent all their days fighting, and the women spent *their* days in urging the warriors to further deeds of valour.

This had gone on for a very long time, and no one had ever yet said that they were tired of it. There was but one person in the whole kingdom who had openly declared that war was hateful, but as she was only the Youngest Princess nobody paid any heed to her.

Then came a time, just before our Christmas Day, when the King was preparing a great campaign against a far-off country. He called together his Council of War—grave old warriors dressed completely in armour.

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"My friends," said he, "we are about to wage war on the distant kingdom of Zowega. Up till this time the people of that country have been our very good friends, but as we have now conquered all our enemies, there seems no one but our friends left to fight, and of these the King of the Zowegians is chief.

"You will remember that his youngest son, Prince Moldo, spent some of his boyhood at our Court in order to gain instruction in feats of arms, and that the Prince left us to travel over the world. A few months ago his father sent word to me that the Prince had returned home, bringing with him the news of a Pearl of Great Price which contained the Secret of Happiness. It is this Pearl which I have made the excuse for war, for I have demanded it in payment for the services that we rendered to Prince Moldo. In my message I have said that if the Pearl, and the Secret which it contains, are not brought and revealed to us here within the next five days, our troops will descend upon the kingdom of Zowega and wipe it off the face of the earth."

Loud and long cheered the Council at the speech of their King, as indeed was their duty, though in their heart of hearts they had no wish to fight against the King of the Zowegians, who was their very good friend. The Queen and the Princesses smiled graciously upon them,

all save the Youngest Princess, who had been Prince Moldo's playfellow. She disgraced herself by bursting into passionate tears, and was forthwith ordered out of the Council Hall.

At the end of five days the Council once more assembled to await the arrival of the messenger with the answer from the King of Zowega.

The day was bright and cold, and there was snow on the ground. The King and Queen were wrapped in thick fur cloaks. The Princesses were all assembled too, even the Youngest, who was dressed in ermine and looked as pale as death.

It was Christmas Eve, but there were no Christmas Trees preparing and no presents. No one was thinking of hanging their stockings up. The Hall was not decorated, neither were the churches; indeed there were no churches to decorate, for, as you remember, the people in this kingdom knew nothing about Christmas.

The Council sat and waited in the big bare Hall.

At last the great doors were flung open, there was a blast of trumpets, and the messenger appeared.

He was tall and fair, and held himself proudly. His eyes were bright and shining and there was a smile upon his face. He was completely dressed in bright green, and the Council noted with astonishment that he was without armour

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of any kind. He wore neither breastplate, shield nor helmet ; he had neither sword by his side, nor spurs on his feet. He was bare-headed, and in his right hand he carried something green, horny and prickly, with little red dots on it.

Looking neither to the right nor to the left, he walked with firm and steady step up the long Hall between the rows of armed warriors.

As he passed the Youngest Princess she blushed deeply, but he did not seem to notice her.

When he reached the throne he bowed low before the King and Queen, and laid the prickly object on the table before them.

"Your Majesty," said he in a clear, ringing voice. "From the King of Zowega, greeting ! He sends you this token. It is the symbol of the Secret of Happiness."

The King stared, so did the Queen.

They had expected a Pearl of Great Price, accompanied by a scroll on which was written the Secret of Happiness, and the King of Zowega had sent them *this* !

Amid dead silence the King took the token up in his hands in order to examine it more carefully.

He dropped it hastily, for it pricked him, and little drops of blood were seen starting from his hand.

"Highty-tighty!" said he. "'Tis surely some kind of a beast and a symbol of war, for it pricked me right smartly. Truly the King of Zowega deals in riddles which I for one cannot read! Take it, my dear," added he to the Queen and pointing to the token; "perchance your quick wits may be able to understand this mystery."

She picked up the token and examined it carefully.

It rather resembled the branch of a tree, but the leaves were thick and resisting and edged with very sharp spikes, and there was on it a cluster of round bright red objects like tiny balls. But even as it had pricked the King so did it prick her, and she dropped it hastily into the lap of the Eldest Princess, who was sitting beside her.

"Paradighty!" exclaimed the Queen in her own language. "It is certainly a beast. See, it has horns!" and she pointed to the spikes, "But I certainly cannot read the riddle—if riddle it be."

Then it was passed to all the Princesses in turn, but they could not read the token any more than could the King and Queen. At last it reached the Youngest Princess, and, though it pricked her little hands sorely, she took it up tenderly and kissed it.

"'Tis a token of love," said she.

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The messenger turned his shining eyes full upon her.

"The Princess has read the riddle of the token aright," said he, and he stepped forward as though to kiss her hand.

"Stay!" said the King imperiously, springing to his feet. "A token of love, forsooth! But I sent the King of Zowega a Declaration of War! What does he mean by sending me a token of love? The Princess must certainly be mistaken—and as for *you*," he continued, turning fiercely to the messenger, "you shall be marched off to prison until we have had time to consult with our Wise Men as to the real meaning of this extraordinary token."

So there and then the messenger was marched off to spend the night in prison, and all the Wise Men in the kingdom were bidden to appear in the Council Chamber the very next day, especially one very old Wise Man from the East who was reputed to be wiser than all the others put together.

The next day, of course, was Christmas Day, but, as these people had never heard of Christmas, there were no bells ringing, no carols were sung, and there was neither holly, ivy nor mistletoe upon the walls.

Slowly and painfully the Wise Men began to arrive.

They were all dressed alike, in black flowing

robes, and on their heads they wore long pointed black caps covered with weird devices.

The very old Wise Man from the East wore a red pointed cap, but in all other respects was dressed just like the others.

They assembled round a large circular table at one end of the Hall. In the middle of the table was placed the token.

At the other end of the Hall were gathered the warriors, and above them on a double throne sat the King and Queen with the Princesses grouped on either side of the dais.

The Wise Men examined the token in silence.

"'Tis a curious beast," said one of them at last.

"Of a new and quite unheard-of species," said another.

"It has neither legs nor tail," said a third.

"Yet it has a number of globular red eyes," said a fourth.

"And it certainly has horns," said a fifth.

And so said they all, until it came to the turn of the very old Wise Man from the East.

He looked long at the token.

"It has horns," said he at last, "but it is not a beast."

"Not a beast!" said they, one to the other.

"But what is it then?"

"It is a token of love," said he.

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"Highty-tighty," interrupted the King. "Read us then the full meaning of the token."

"I cannot," said the very old Wise Man; "but let the youth be brought hither who carried it. He will be able to explain it more fully than I."

"Paradighty!" said the Queen in her own language. "Why did we not think of that before! Fetch him back again at once!"

So two of the warriors fetched the youth from prison, and he was soon standing before the Assembly, with his head held as high and his eyes as bright and shining as before.

"Read us the token!" commanded the King.

The youth bowed low. "The Princess read it aright yesterday," said he. "It is a token of love."

"Explain yourself!" said the King sternly. "How can a beast with horns be a token of love?"

The youth drew himself up to his full height.

"It is not a beast," said he. "It is the branch of a holly-tree. On this day of the year, which in my country we call Christmas Day, our people decorate their houses with branches of this holly or holy tree as a token of love and peace and good-will. This is the message that I have brought to you—a message that we in our country know very well, but which you have never heard before."

The King and the Warriors, the Wise Men,

the Queen and Princesses all listened to his words in silence.

When he had ended there was a long pause.

"And in what particular way does your message affect us?" said the King at last.

"Thus, your Majesty," answered the youth, approaching the Youngest Princess and taking both her hands in his, "on this day I, Prince Moldo, would have peace and good-will between my kingdom and your kingdom; and I would seal it for ever by taking the Youngest Princess home with me as my bride. You, O King, recognized me not, for I have much changed since I lived here with her for playfellow, but in all my wanderings I found a Pearl of no greater price than this, and I would proclaim to all the world that the Secret of Happiness is Love."

So on that very Christmas Day they were married, amid great rejoicings, and war ceased throughout the kingdom. And on every Christmas Day for ever after, the people of that country decorated their houses with holly, the symbol of love and peace and good-will, and wished each other a Merry Christmas, even as I do now to you.

II

THE AVENUE OF DREAMS

*A sad tale's best for winter :
I have one of sprites and goblins.*

SHAKESPEARE

THERE was once a little boy called Tom who had two pet and particular friends. One was a goblin, a real live goblin, coal-black ; and the other a sprite, a real live sprite, as airy as moonshine.

By day the goblin lived in the water cistern in the attic, and if ever Tom climbed the attic stairs, he could hear the goblin muttering and chuckling to himself in the dark ; and the sprite lived all folded up into nothing in the night-light box, and was quite invisible.

But at night the goblin hopped out of the cistern, and sat on the bottom rail of Tom's little bed, and showed him a hundred funny tricks, and told him a hundred funny stories ; and the sprite skipped out of the night-light box and quivered and hovered over the night-light, and was so pretty and dainty that Tom could scarcely keep his eyes off her !

What fun they all had together !

Sometimes Tom took the goblin's little black

hand and went for adventures with him. Sometimes the sprite sent a moonbeam through the window and they all went for a ride on it.

Sometimes the goblin would show Tom the best way to stand on his head and Tom would practise it in bed; and the sprite would show him how to vanish into space, which he never *could* accomplish properly (the nearest he ever got to it was when Nanny once shut the door in his face because she thought he was not there). Yes, indeed, they had the times together! They played and adventured together night after night until the night of Tom's eighth birthday.

It was after Christmas, and a bleak and wintry, and Tom was going to school the next day.

"It's your last night-light," Nanny had said, as she lit and shut the night nursery door.

Tom was feeling rather sad. It was very cold too, and he pulled the blankets well up over his face, with only his eyes peeping out over the top.

"Hullo!" came a familiar voice—and there on the rug at the foot of the bed sat the goblin. "Good evening!" came another familiar voice—and there, dancing and swaying over the night-light, flitted the sprite.

"Well, what about our last adventure?" said the goblin, standing on one leg and kicking the

other high in the air. "Would you like to come with me and sprite here to Goblin Land, and see us put to sleep for a thousand years?" and he twirled round and round rapidly on one pointed toe.

"Our last adventure!" gasped Tom. "A thousand years! What do you mean? Aren't you coming back any more?"

"Why!" said the goblin. "How foolish you are! Why, you will be eight years old to-morrow, and you are going to school, and you want to know if we are coming back any more! Of course we are *never* coming back!" and he stood on his head and waved his feet in the air.

"Yes," put in the little sprite. "Surely you know that on the very night a little boy or girl becomes eight years old, and goes to school, a goblin and a sprite are put to sleep for a thousand years in the Avenue of Dreams? It is our turn to-night."

Tom stared.

"Never coming back!" he repeated. "But I love you both! Never coming back!" and then everything seemed to get all blurred, and he found himself holding the goblin's little black, froggy hand, and running up a very steep dark passage, with the sprite flitting along in front of them.

It was bitterly cold. Tom shivered.

"Where are we?" said he.

"Well, at the present moment we are going up the chimney," said the goblin. "You will find that you will get along much better if you keep your eyes shut."

Tom shut his eyes obediently, and they just *whizzed* along.

When Tom opened his eyes again he found himself out on the roof.

It was a clear winter night, no leaves on the trees, no flowers in the garden, and a cold wind blowing.

"When the wind comes next," said the goblin, "turn round, sit on it, and wish yourself there!"

"Where?" asked Tom.

"In Goblin Land of course," said the goblin, and the sprite shook with laughter at Tom's stupidity.

So, when the wind came next, Tom turned round, sat on it, and wished himself there with all his might—and there he was!

Goblin Land was a black and blue country, and quite flat, except for a few humps here and there. There was a cluster of houses in the distance, toward which they were walking rapidly.

As they drew nearer, Tom saw that these houses were made entirely of tapestry, and covered all over with queer devices.

Goblins were here, there, and everywhere, grinning, capering, chattering, and bouncing up and down like india-rubber balls.

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Strange, slim, twisted shadows grew sprouting from the ground in the shapes of trees; through the gaps between them Tom could see a shimmering light in which twirled and twinkled hundreds of sprites.

The goblins were horribly bad-mannered and made faces at Tom as he went along.

Tom's goblin elbowed and pushed his way through the crowd, and the little sprite floated on above their heads.

They came to the largest of the tapestry houses, and the goblin touched one side of it which drew apart. They stepped in, and the side of the house closed noiselessly behind them.

They were in a huge blue-black room filled with sprites and goblins playing leap-frog and hide-and-seek together. At the end of the room there was a raised throne on which sat a very old goblin. The old goblin's eyes shone like glowing coals and lit up the whole scene, and he himself was never still a minute.

They made their way up the centre of the hall. As they passed, the crowd gradually stopped frolicking and stood still to stare at them, the goblins on one leg, the sprites quivering above like a host of little twinkling stars in the blue-black of the roof.

Tom's goblin bowed low before the old goblin on the throne.

Tom bowed too.

"How old are you?" said the old goblin, pointing a skinny finger at Tom and winking wickedly at all the other little goblins.

"I shall be eight to-morrow," said Tom.

"What a pity!" said the old goblin, and all the sprites echoed: "What a pity!"

"Well," said the old goblin, winking the other eye, and pointing with one hand at Tom's goblin, and with the other at Tom's sprite. "Well, you know the rules. One last frolic, and then away to bed in the Avenue of Dreams for a thousand years. As for you," he continued, pointing with both hands this time at Tom again, "it's good-bye to us, you know. You won't see us again—ever."

"Nor us either," twinkled the little sprites.

"Nor us either," shouted all the goblins at once.

Then the frolic began again.

Tom's own goblin and sprite played more madly, and jumped and flitted more merrily, than any of them.

First the goblins had a bouncing match, and Tom's goblin showed them how to bounce right through the roof.

Then they had a long and complicated game of leap-frog, and Tom's goblin leapt over all the other little goblins on his head.

Then they played at who could make the ugliest face. Tom's goblin won easily.

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Then they had a pinching match, and any goblin who came near Tom's goblin was black and blue in a twinkling.

After this they played a weird game of hide-and-seek. The goblins who were hiding flattened themselves like shadows against the tapestry walls, and when those who were finding came near, a black toe or finger would come suddenly out of the tapestry and give them a kick or a pinch. If the finders could catch hold of the toe or finger and hold it fast, the hiders were considered 'caught,' but they mostly slipped out of the finder's grasp like slippery little eels.

Tom's goblin was never caught once.

As for the sprites, they flitted and darted hither and thither, now here, now there; tickling this goblin with a feather; swirling round the head of that goblin until he felt quite giddy; darting into corners and out again; and, when the goblins tried to catch them, disappearing into nothing at once. Tom's sprite seemed more nimble and mischievous than any of them.

And Tom himself? He stood quite still in the middle of all this merry throng, feeling sadder and more lonely than he had ever felt in all his life; and as the frolic grew wilder and wilder, he felt himself growing sadder and sadder.

Just as the fun was at its height, the old

goblin on the throne, who all this time had never been still a minute, clapped his hands three times.

One! two! three!

Immediately the glowing light in his eyes went out, and the room became quite dim.

All the little goblins, with the old goblin at the head of them, took hands and danced round Tom in a circle one way; and the sprites took hands and danced above Tom in another circle going the other way.

As the goblins danced they chanted this queer song:

"When you're covered with ink,
And trying to think,
You had better not wink!"

Here they all winked at Tom together and then continued:

"Though from quarrels you flinch,
If the matter you'd clinch
You had better not pinch!"

Here they all pinched Tom very mischievously, and then began the last verse:

"If of sense you've an ounce
On learning you'll pounce.
But you'd better not bounce!"

And then they all bounced up into the air, so high that they vanished right away, and never came back—all except Tom's goblin.

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When they had gone the sprites took up the song, swirling round Tom's head ever faster and faster as it progressed :

"Tirra-diddle! Tara diddle!

Sing a little.

Dance a little.

Play a little.

Work a little.

Love a little.

Hate a little.

Here a little.

There a little.

And then Nowhere At All a little!"

At the last words the sprites disappeared and melted away into nothing, and never came back—all except Tom's sprite.

When they had gone it seemed very still and quiet in the vast hall. Tom had never felt so desperately sad.

"Can't you stay with me always?" he said.

The goblin shook his head, so did the sprite.

They each took one of Tom's hands and led him through a door at the other side of the hall which he had not noticed before.

The door led into the Avenue of Dreams.

What a strange sight! Tom will never forget it as long as he lives.

Stretching out in front of him was a long, long avenue—blue-black, of course. On each side of it grew great, still, shadow trees. At the root of each tree, covered with shadow moss, lay a

sleeping goblin. In the topmost branch of each tree, caught like a dead star, and covered with a cobweb, lay a sleeping sprite. The ground was soft and mossy. Not a sound to be heard anywhere. It was very beautiful.

Tom felt sadder than ever.

Hand in hand they walked slowly down this long Avenue of Dreams. At last they came to a tree as yet unoccupied.

The goblin gave Tom a gentle pinch, curled himself up among the roots, and the shadow moss fell over him. The sprite kissed Tom once on the mouth, flew up to the topmost branch, and a cobweb floated down to cover her. There they both lay, for a thousand years, as fast asleep as all the other myriads of sprites and goblins in the long, long avenue.

Tom's eyes filled with tears.

"Good-bye," he said softly under his breath.

Then a wind sprang up, and Tom, remembering the goblin's old instructions, turned round, sat on it, and wished himself there !

And there he was ! Home again, in bed, with the night-light out, a cold wind whistling down the chimney, and daylight streaming through the window curtains.

Tom stretched himself, and remarked with surprise that his eyes and cheeks were wet as though he had been crying.

Then he scrambled out of bed with a shout :

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"Hooray ! I am eight years old to-day ! And I am going to school this very morning !"

But he never saw his friends the goblin and the sprite again, for they are still sleeping out their thousand years in the Avenue of Dreams.

And

and
out
as.

